



ANGLO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS  
CONCERNING AFGHANISTAN  
1837-1907

BY

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## PREFACE

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The question of Anglo-Russian relations concerning Afghanistan is a complicated one, involving not only England, Russia, and Afghanistan, but quite directly Persia, less directly Turkey, and indirectly France and all the European Powers whose interests in the nineteenth century were directed to the affairs of the Levant and beyond. Its intricacy is, of course, not unique. Indeed no fact is more constant, as every student of the history of European activities in Asia knows, than that of the subtle connections between European politics and the expansion of European interests and sovereignty in the Orient. My problem, therefore, of extracting from the elaborate pattern of diplomacy, even that part of it in which Great Britain and Russia definitely predominate, the single thread of which this essay treats, has been a difficult one, and has caused me to apprehend with new clarity the classic statement of Sir Frederick Pollock, "Such is the unity of all history that any one who endeavours to tell a piece of it must feel that his first sentence tears a seamless web." It is with full recognition of the narrow, segmentary character of this study that I present it, hoping, nevertheless, that it may cast some light on the obscurities of that larger segment, for the designation of which historians have agreed upon the rubric, "Central Asian Question."

I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to a number of persons who have materially aided me in the present study. My friends Mr. A. O. Sarkissian and Mr. G. L. La Fuze have been very helpful in giving bibliographical suggestions; Professor F. S. Rodkey has kindly made available unpublished materials collected by him in the British Foreign Office; my wife has read and typed the manuscript, and has in many ways assisted in its preparation. To Professor A. H. Lybyer I am particularly indebted and grateful, not only because of his counsel and criticism in connection with this essay, but because of the constant inspiration that association with him has afforded throughout the period of my graduate study.



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## THE GENESIS OF THE AFGHAN QUESTION

"He alone can be Emperor of Hindostan who is first lord of Kabul."  
—Old Indian proverb.

The Afghan question as a distinct factor in Anglo-Russian diplomacy originated during the Whig Ministry of Lord Melbourne, who became Prime Minister in the spring of 1835. Lord Palmerston was Foreign Secretary, and Sir John Cam Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton) presided over the Board of Commissioners for Indian Affairs. Palmerston was an ardent Russophobe, and his suspicions concerning the purposes of the Russian Government were shown particularly in his solicitude for the safety of India. For Governor-General the undistinguished Lord Auckland was nominated (at the instance, it was thought, of Lord Palmerston),<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding the fact that Lord Heytesbury, a nobleman of approved diplomatic skill, had been chosen shortly before by the Peel Ministry and had taken the oath of office. Palmerston's opposition to Heytesbury seems to have grown out of the fact that he had been Ambassador to Russia, and was known to be an admirer of Tsar Nicholas.<sup>2</sup> As Minister to Persia Palmerston selected Dr. John McNeill, a well-known Russophobe, to succeed Mr. Ellis. McNeill had been attached as a medical officer to the British Mission at Teheran, but was later assigned diplomatic duties. It was apparently a tract of his, *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*, published in 1836, that attracted the favorable attention of the Foreign Secretary and won for him his appointment in that year to the court of the Shah.

The anxiety entertained by the London Government concerning the state of affairs in Central Asia—the equivocal allegiance of Persia (bound to England by the alliance of 1814),<sup>3</sup> the divided and unsettled condition of Afghanistan, the growth of Russian influence<sup>4</sup>—as well as its determination to overcome these conditions, is brought out in a letter to

<sup>1</sup>See Bulwer, *Life of Palmerston*, II, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>By the Treaty of Teheran, Persia engaged to prevent the passage through her territory of any European army marching toward India, and to use her influence to induce the rulers of Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand to oppose in like manner the march of an invading army toward India through these territories. Henceforth "the limits of the two States of Russia and Persia were to be determined according to the admission of Great Britain, Persia, and Russia." In the event of war, Great Britain and Persia were mutually to aid each other. In the event of war between England and Afghanistan, the Shah would place a Persian army at the disposal of the English. In a Perso-Afghan war, on the other hand, England agreed not to interfere, and to use her good offices only at the request of both belligerent states. (Text of treaty in *British and Foreign State Papers*, I (1812-1814), pp. 261-264.) See Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, pp. 35 ff.

<sup>4</sup>On returning to Persia McNeill wrote: "Nothing has struck me more forcibly since my return to Persia than the evidence I everywhere find of the increase of Russian influence over the Government since I was formerly here, and the almost unaccountable decline of our own." (*Memoir of Sir John McNeill*, p. 193.)



no *European* nation had relations, either commercial or political, with Afghanistan. The statement exempted India; and it was through India from first to last that the British conducted their relations with Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> But with the increasingly close integration, as time passed, of Indian affairs with those of the British Empire, the distinction implied came to be quite nominal save as its correlative, the relations of Afghanistan with India, was sedulously and consistently maintained. Indeed it would seem that the policy outlined by Ellis was, as Count Nesselrode later said, an aggressively exclusive one, and it is not surprising that the Russian Cabinet was indisposed agreeably to accept its tenets.

The situation as described by Ellis aroused Lord Palmerston, however, and he addressed the Imperial Government through Lord Durham, British Ambassador, concerning the alleged activities of the Russian Minister at Teheran. Was Count Simonich acting in accordance with instructions from St. Petersburg in urging that the Shah undertake a winter campaign against Herat? Such a campaign would be so injurious to the Shah's best interests and "so contrary to all the professed principles and declared system of the Russian Government," however, it must be presumed that Simonich was not acting on Government instructions. If such were the case, "Her Majesty's Government cannot doubt that the Russian Cabinet will put a stop to a course of conduct, so much at variance with its own declared policy, and so adverse to the best interests of an ally, for whom the Russian Government professes friendship and goodwill."<sup>21</sup>

In answering Lord Palmerston's inquiry, Count Nesselrode assured the British Ambassador that if the Russian Minister had acted in the manner described by Mr. Ellis, he had not only done so on his own initiative, but had violated very positive orders "to dissuade the Shah from prosecuting the war at any time and in any circumstances."<sup>22</sup> As a matter of fact, Nesselrode was convinced that Simonich had not given the advice attributed to him, and quite agreed with the British Government as to "the folly and impolicy of the course pursued by the Persian Monarch."<sup>23</sup>

If the Russian Minister *did* oppose the Persian enterprise against Herat,<sup>24</sup> his influence was insufficient to dissuade the Shah from advancing

<sup>20</sup>That is, throughout the period covered in this account. The arrangement was modified by the treaty of 1921, and Afghanistan now has direct representation at London.

<sup>21</sup>Palmerston to Durham, January 16, 1837. *Parl. Papers*, 1837, XI, p. 17. The term "ally" refers to the close relations between Russia and Persia established by the Treaty of Turkmanchai, 1828.

<sup>22</sup>Durham to Palmerston, February 24, 1837. *Parl. Papers*, 1837, XI, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Schiemann, who had access to the Russian documents, holds that the Shah acted contrary to the advice of the Russian Minister in undertaking the campaign against Herat. (*Op. cit.*, III, p. 258.) Bourgeois, on the other hand, avers that "Les crâtes, après avoir arraché à la Perse, et le traité de Tourmanok-Tchal (1828), le monopole de la Caspienne, l'Arménie avec Eriwan, et le Daghestan avec Derbent, avaient commencé d'établir leur autorité sur le Shah Mahammed qu'ils poussaient dès 1837 à l'occupation d'Herat et de l'Afghanistan. Effrayé, le souverain de ce pays à son tour se donna aux Russes." (*Manuel historique de politique étrangère*, III, pp. 232-233.) As a matter of fact it does not seem possible to determine what is the exact truth with regard

ing on the Afghan city in the autumn of 1837.<sup>25</sup> To the British the situation appeared critical. Strategically, Herat was deemed extremely important. As Sir John Hobhouse declared in the House of Commons, "the best authorities had laid it down as an indisputable fact that that city and its immediate dependencies are the most important of all the cities and States of Central Asia, and that the master of Herat is in a position, both with reference to Persia and to the Affghan States, to hold the balance, if it has any considerable power, between the parties who might control for empire much further and with much greater proximity to India."<sup>26</sup> Standing in a fertile oasis, rich in the materials for military supplies, Herat "was a starting point of routes to Kabul on the one hand and to Kandahar on the other, from both of which run natural lines of invasion into India."<sup>27</sup>

Palmerston's diplomacy brought ready promises from St. Petersburg, but for the time being no more tangible results. In June, 1837, he wrote McNeill, "We drove Russia to the wall about Count Simonich; the Emperor had no choice but to recall him and to acknowledge that Nesselrode had been telling a series of untruths."<sup>28</sup> A year later, however, Simonich not only still remained at his post, but had followed the Persian army to Herat and, according to Kaye, was virtually directing its attack upon the city.<sup>29</sup>

In March, 1838, McNeill wrote to Lord Auckland, urging that an expeditionary force be sent to the Persian Gulf, with the object of forcing the Shah to listen to British representations.<sup>30</sup> Not content with this, he proceeded in April to the Persian camp outside Herat, entered the fortress, and succeeded in arranging a draft treaty between Kamran Mirza, the Sadozai ruler of Herat, and Shah Mohammed.<sup>31</sup> The Shah did not ratify, however, ostensibly because the presence in the Persian camp of Count Simonich with his suite of Russian officers and his free distribution of Russian roubles raised the Persian morale and their hope of ultimate victory.<sup>32</sup> The siege of Herat continued, and McNeill, failing

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to these matters—that is, the advice given the Shah concerning the projected attack on Herat, and the responsibility of the Imperial Cabinet for Count Simonich's part, if the Russian Minister did, as the British believed, encourage the enterprise. That Russian influence was an important factor in determining the action of Shah Mohammed, there is little doubt. Its precise character remains conjectural.

<sup>25</sup>The siege began on November 23. See Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 218-219.

<sup>26</sup>Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, LXIV, p. 475.

<sup>27</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, p. 204.

<sup>28</sup>*Memoir of Sir John McNeill*, p. 210. The date given is "10th June, 1827"—an obvious error.

<sup>29</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, p. 250. See also Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan*, I, p. 285.

<sup>30</sup>*Memoir of Sir John McNeill*, p. 209.

<sup>31</sup>A translation of the draft treaty is given in *Parl. Papers*, 1839, XL, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup>See Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, p. 250, and the *Memoir of Sir John McNeill*, p. 215. When McNeill was in St. Petersburg in February, 1839 (he was then returning to England) he discussed the question of the treaty with Nesselrode. A "note of the interview" is given in the *Memoir* (pp. 239-240). It follows in part: "H. E. [Count Nesselrode] said that he had seen that draft of a treaty, and much regretted that the Shah had not accepted it. I said, as H. E. had seen it, he must be aware that it contained all the satisfaction for the past and all the guarantees for the future that could be well desired. H. E. admitted that it did, and again expressed his regret that the Shah had not accepted it. I then informed H. E. that I feared that the course pursued

in his efforts to effect a reconciliation between the contending parties, and learning that Burnes's efforts at Kabul had likewise failed, left the Persian camp and set out for Tabriz. Writing to Palmerston some time later (August 3), he "painted the situation in the most gloomy colors. The united influence of Persia and Russia was on the eve of complete dominance in Afghanistan. No means, therefore, must be neglected to guarantee the defence of British India."<sup>33</sup>

While Simonich and McNeill were contending at Teheran and before Herat for the upper hand, a similar contest was ensuing in Kabul, ultimately with similar results. From Burnes's correspondence it appears that Dost Mohammed was at first distinctly inclined to the British side, even suggesting, on hearing of the approach of Vicovich, refusal to receive him.<sup>34</sup> Burnes was without political authority, however, and was unable to meet the demands of the Amir in connection with Peshawar, which he sought to have restored to his control, or to promise to strengthen him in his local authority.<sup>35</sup> Later, when Burnes received instructions from the Indian Government, he was definitely charged to make no concessions: Peshawar must remain in the hands of the Sikhs. "Then, but not till then, a change came over the conduct of Dost Mahomed, and the Russian Mission began to rise in importance."<sup>36</sup> Having failed to obtain the support of the British, the Amir turned to Vicovich. Burnes left Kabul on April 26, 1838, leaving the field to his Russian adversary.<sup>37</sup>

Vicovich did not scruple to make the most of his opportunities. He promised "everything that Dost Mohammed wanted—engaging to furnish money to the Barukzye chiefs, and undertaking to propitiate Runjeet Singh."<sup>38</sup> Leaving Kabul and going into western Afghanistan, he

by Count Simonich had much contributed to the rejection of that treaty. He said that Count S. had acted contrary to his instructions. I observed that it was a great misfortune that the accredited agents of the Russian Government should have persevered for nearly two years after H. E. had announced the views of the Russian Government to Lord Durham, to act in a sense directly opposed to those views, and it was remarkable that they had done so more openly and decidedly after the announcement than before it. That it was incredible to me that Simonich should have hazarded such a deviation from his duty without some prospect of support, and as that support could not be from the Emperor or H. E., I could only infer that there was some other influence, at variance with that of the Government, which was exercised with sinister intentions, for that I conceived that any man who sought to bring about a misunderstanding between Russia and England could be no loyal subject of the Emperor. H. E. said: 'We are speaking of things that are past; Simonich has, you see, been recalled.' I said that I was aware that he had been replaced. He repeated that he had been recalled, and added, 'Let us look to the future.'"

<sup>33</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, p. 205. Palmerston was greatly concerned about the outcome of the siege, and wrote to Lord John Russell: "The Success of the Shah in Afghanistan would be full of danger and embarrassment to us in India . . . He is acting avowedly as the tool of Russia; and the Proceedings of Russia in Afghanistan are certainly as direct approach to British India as it is at present in her power to make." (Quoted in Guedalla, *Palmerston*, p. 220.)

<sup>34</sup>See Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, p. 188.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 181 ff. See also *The Times* of June 25, 1842.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106. It does not seem, as one might infer from Kaye, that the Amir had any predilection for the English as English, but simply thought that his own interests might be served better by them than by the Russians, particularly as regards Peshawar. See Mohan Lal, *op. cit.*, I, p. 260.

<sup>37</sup>Kaye, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.* For the extravagant statements attributed to Vicovich, see Mohan Lal, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 304 ff. Among other things, "The Russian agent . . . issued a report that fifty thousand men of Russian regiments were in readiness to land in Astrabad, in order to keep peace in the rear of Mohammed Shah, who would then march towards the Panjab; that such movements would rouse all the discontented chiefs of India to rebel; and that the English, who are not soldiers, but merely mercantile adventurers of Europe, would not dare to assist Ranjit Singh, knowing that the Afghans are succoured by the warlike nation of Russia."

conflagration in that vast portion of the globe. But, to prevent that great calamity, it is necessary to maintain the tranquillity of the immediate countries which separate the possessions of Russia from those of Great Britain. To consolidate the tranquillity of those countries; not to excite them against each other by nourishing their mutual animosities, to be contented with competing in industry, but not to engage in a struggle for political influence; finally, beyond everything else, to respect the *independence* of the immediate countries which separate us, such is, in our opinion, the system which the Cabinets have a common interest to pursue, in order to prevent the possibility of a conflict between two great Powers, which, that they may remain friends, require not to touch each other, and not to come into collision with each other in the centre of Asia.

A later note<sup>46</sup> (March 5) dealt more specifically and fully with certain aspects of the Afghan situation, particularly the draft treaty between the Shah of Persia and Kohundil Khan, by which the latter was to receive the city of Herat in the expected event of its being taken by the Persians. Count Simonich, considering that he was acting in the interests of the Shah, had taken upon himself the responsibility of giving "to that Act a guarantee which the Persian Government and the Sirdar of Kandahar unanimously required of him, as a pledge of the reliance which they might thereafter have to repose in their mutual obligations. Full of suspicion, each of the other, they equally felt the necessity of appealing to the impartiality of a third party. This motive decided our minister not to refuse his guarantee, which was demanded from him by both parties as an indispensable condition to their engagements."

A draft of the convention had reached the Russian Cabinet in April, 1838, and though it contained nothing indicating an aggressive or hostile design, the Emperor refused to confirm the guarantee, and on April 26 (1838) ordered Count Simonich "to abstain from making himself guarantee [*sic*] to a transaction to which our Cabinet thought it right to remain completely a stranger."<sup>47</sup> So that there could be no question as to the position of the Imperial Government concerning this treaty, General Duhamel, Count Simonich's successor, was given definite orders "to declare to the Shah, as well as to the Affghans, that the compact which his predecessors had guaranteed" had not received the sanction of the Tsar, and, so far as the Imperial Government was concerned, was without effect.

In addition to the rejection by the Russian Government of the guarantee extended by Simonich, his successor had orders to make it clear

That the intention of the Emperor has been, and will continue to be, not to maintain with Affghanistan any other than purely commercial relations:

That his wishes have been ill-expressed or ill-understood, if any political tendency has been attributed to them:

Finally, that Russia will not take any part in the civil wars of the Affghan Chiefs, nor in their family feuds, which have no claim to our intervention.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Nesselrode to Pozzo di Borgo, March 5, 1839. *Parl. Papers*, 1839, XL, pp. 200-204.

<sup>47</sup>For a further consideration of the question of the Russian guarantee, see Schiemann, *op. cit.*, III, p. 299.

Thus, the British Government succeeded in obtaining from the Imperial Government a repudiation of the work of its Persian Minister and his agent in Afghanistan,<sup>48</sup> and a positive statement that Russia would have no political relations with Afghanistan. This was not accomplished, however, by diplomacy alone. The failure of Mr. McNeill to effect a settlement between the Persians and the Heratees and to bring the siege of Herat to an end, was followed by the dispatching of a British expedition (as McNeill had advised) to the Persian Gulf, and the occupation of Bushire and the island of Karrak.<sup>49</sup> This was in June, 1838. Fortified by news of the action of the Indian Government (greatly magnified, says Kaye, by the time it reached the Persian camp before Herat),<sup>50</sup> McNeill, then making his way to the frontier, sent Colonel Stoddart back to the Persian camp with a message for the Shah. "The language of the message was very intelligible and very decided."<sup>51</sup> The Shah was informed that the occupation of Herat or of any part of Afghanistan would "be considered in the light of a hostile demonstration against England; and that he could not persist in his present course without immediate danger and injury to Persia."<sup>52</sup> Colonel Stoddart arrived in the Persian camp on August 11, and within a month the Persian army had commenced its retrograde march toward Teheran.<sup>53</sup>

As for the sequel to the British efforts in Afghanistan, the story is very different. The Burnes mission having failed, Lord Auckland resolved upon intervention, and in preparation for it concluded with Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja a tripartite treaty.<sup>54</sup> The tragic history of the First Afghan War is not germane to this study. It had for its purpose the placing on the throne of Kabul of a ruler who would be amenable to British authority; the tool of its accomplishment was to be Shah Shuja, an unpopular and rejected claimant to the throne, who proved to be a

<sup>48</sup>Kaye (*op. cit.*, I, p. 200) gives the following interesting and revealing account of the tragic end of Captain Vickovich: "What befel the unhappy agent after this, it is painful to relate. When he returned to Persia, in 1839, after giving a full report of his mission to M. Duhamel, the new minister at Teheran, he was instructed to proceed direct to St. Petersburg. On his arrival there, full of hope, for he had discharged the duty entrusted to him with admirable address, he reported himself, after customary formality, to Count Nesselrode; but the minister refused to see him. Instead of a flattering welcome, the unhappy envoy was received with a crushing message, to the effect that Count Nesselrode 'knew no Captain Vickovich, except an adventurer of that name, who, it was reported, had been lately engaged in some unauthorized intrigues at Kabul and Candahar.' Vickovich understood at once the dire portent of this message. He knew the character of his government. He was aware of the recent expostulations of Great Britain. And he saw clearly that he was to be sacrificed. He went back to his hotel, wrote a few bitter, reproachful lines, burnt all his other papers, and blew out his brains."

<sup>49</sup>"This action," says Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky (*Russia and Asia*, p. 115) "was a break of The Definite [*sic*] Treaty between England and Persia, for in that treaty it was clearly specified that Great Britain would not interfere in a war between Persia and Afghanistan." (See above, p. 9, note 3.) The action of the British, advised by McNeill, was justified by him in a note to Palmerston dated April 11, 1838. He held that since the "avowed original object" of the treaty was to give "additional security to India" against the "designs of the only Power which threatened to disturb us in that quarter," the alliance of Persia with that Power (Russia) absolved England from her obligations toward the Government which had thus "flagrantly violated" its treaty commitments. (McNeill to Palmerston, April 11, 1838. *Parl. Papers*, 1839, XL, p. 85.)

<sup>50</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, p. 272.

<sup>51</sup>Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, p. 273. The text of McNeill's note is given in the *Memoir*, pp. 224-225.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>54</sup>The text of the treaty is given in Kaye, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 319-323.



to have recoiled. The English, it is true, avenged the opprobrious and annihilating defeats of the first invasion and retrieved the prisoners—most of them women—whom they had left at Kabul. But the memories of 1842 remained, and for a long time after the war they studiously avoided all intercourse with that country. The Russians too had learned their lesson, and for many years Central Asia was not a dangerous field of contention between the two Powers. As to whether this was due in part to some secret agreement concerning the Nearer East, as Goryainov would have us believe,<sup>69</sup> we need not here inquire. We do know that Tsar Nicholas was greatly pleased with the overthrow of the Whigs in 1841, and welcomed the return to power of "persons whose principles are the same with his own; and among whom (Wellington) he counted his personal friend."<sup>70</sup> Even the Crimean War and the Mutiny were passed without serious reverberations on the Indian frontier, and a new generation of statesmen was in control when the issue was revived.

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<sup>69</sup>Goryainov's thesis was presented in the *Russian Review* (Liverpool) in 1912 under the title "The Secret Agreement Between Russia and England" (Vol. I, No. III, pp. 97-115; No. IV, pp. 76-91). It was later elaborated by Vernon J. Puryear in his monograph entitled *England, Russia and the Straits Question, 1844-1856*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1931.)

<sup>70</sup>Rothschild to Aberdeen, November 22, 1841. F. O. Russia, 65/273.

## THE "INTERMEDIARY ZONE" AND THE AGREEMENT OF 1873

The "long peace" between England and Russia concerning Central Asia was not broken until after the Crimean War. During the 1860's, however, the Russian advance in the Middle East was resumed, with the inevitable concomitant of renewed friction. In 1864 Russian authority was extended to the borders of Khokand,<sup>1</sup> Bokhara, and Khiva; in 1865 Tashkent was occupied; in 1867 the new province of Russian Turkestan was created, and Bokhara became a "subsidiary ally" of the Tsar;<sup>2</sup> in 1868 Samarkand, previously "temporarily occupied," was annexed.<sup>3</sup> Such a growth of empire was itself a matter of sufficiently grave import to many Englishmen; but the situation as regards Afghanistan was rendered especially delicate by reason of its strategic geographic position and its uncertain boundaries. Statesmen in India, while differing in some fundamental questions of policy, were agreed in regarding the northwest frontier as the "Empire's greatest source of anxiety, and Afghanistan, lying as it did between two great rival Powers, as the weakest link in an imperfect chain of defence."<sup>4</sup> It was this concern for the safety of India which caused a revival of the Afghan question and occasioned intermittent, frequently acrimonious, negotiations between Great Britain and Russia for a period of forty years.

As early as September, 1867, the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, suggested to the Home Government the desirability of entering negotiations with St. Petersburg concerning the frontier questions, so that the relations of the British and Russian Governments would "be openly acknowledged, and admitted as bringing them into necessary contact and treaty with the tribes and nations on the several sides of such a line. If an understanding . . . of this nature were come to, the Government of India on the one hand could look on without anxiety or apprehension at the proceedings of Russia on her southern frontier, and welcome the civilising effect of her border Government on the wild tribes of the Steppe and on the bigoted and exclusive Governments of Bokhara and Khokand; while Russia, on the other hand, assured of our loyal feeling in the matter, would have no jealousy in respect of our alliance with the Afghan and

<sup>1</sup>The invasion of Khokand by the Russians was explained and justified by Prince Gortchakoff in his now famous Circular of November 21, 1864. The text is given in *Parl. Papers*, 1873, LXXV ("Appendix"), pp. 72-75.

<sup>2</sup>*Cambridge History of the British Empire*, V, pp. 407-408.

<sup>3</sup>The annexation of Samarkand particularly created great consternation in England. See Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Granville, George Leveson Gower, Second Earl of Granville*, II, p. 408.

<sup>4</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, III, p. 72.

neighbouring tribes, or of our negotiations to repress Persia in her designs upon the tracts which border upon her eastern frontier."<sup>5</sup>

The Government's first reaction to Lawrence's suggestion was one of indifference: no anxiety was entertained regarding Russia's movements; indeed it was felt that the establishment under her auspices of order and civilization was to be preferred to a continuance of the chronic anarchy which existed in the border states.<sup>6</sup> This point of view was altered, however, with the further advance of the Russians and later more urgent requests from Lawrence that the Russians be given to understand, "in firm but courteous language," that they would not be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan or any of the states contiguous with the Indian frontier.<sup>7</sup> Lord Clarendon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Gladstone Cabinet, discussing the Central Asian question with Baron Brunnow in the early part of 1869, recommended the recognition of some territory as neutral between the possessions of England and Russia, "which should be the limit of those possessions, and be scrupulously respected by both Powers."<sup>8</sup> Brunnow communicated the suggestion to his Government, which considered it favorably, and replied that it was quite in harmony with the idea always held by the Tsar that the two Powers should not become contiguous in Asia.<sup>9</sup> Writing to Baron Brunnow (March 7, 1869) Prince Gortchakoff said: ". . . sa Majesté Impériale considère l'Afghanistan comme entièrement en dehors de la sphère où la Russie peut être appelée à exercer son influence. Aucune intervention ou ingérence quelconque, contraire à l'indépendance de cet Etat, n'entre dans ses intentions."

He added:

Si le Cabinet de Londres, comme nous l'espérons, est animé des mêmes convictions que nous, le désir témoigne par Lord Clarendon se trouverait réalisé; nos possessions respectives en Asie seraient séparées par une zone indépendante qui les préserverait de tout compact immédiat, et les deux pays pourraient, en toute sécurité, se livrer à l'accomplissement de la mission civilisatrice qui leur est dévolue, chacun dans la sphère naturelle qui lui appartient, en se prêtant même le mutuel concours qui résulte aujourd'hui de la diffusion générale lumières et du progrès.<sup>10</sup>

Gortchakoff's suggestion of Afghanistan as an appropriate neutral zone was referred to the Indian authorities. They quickly rejected it.<sup>11</sup> The Viceroy, Lord Mayo, said, however, that the Government of India was prepared "to give a definite form to this policy [of maintaining a neutral zone] by supporting the independence of Kelat, Afghanistan, and

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Aitchison, *Lord Lawrence*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>6</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, III, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup>Aitchison, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>8</sup>Clarendon to Buchanan, March 27, 1869. *British and Foreign State Papers*, 1872-1873, LXIII, p. 658. (Hereinafter cited as *State Papers*.)

<sup>9</sup>Gortchakoff to Brunnow, March 7, 1869. *Ibid.*, pp. 659-660.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>See the letter of Lord Mayo dated June 10, 1869, for an expression of the Viceroy's opposition. Quoted in Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, p. 309.

Yarkend, and they wished that Russia should be invited to adopt the same action in regard to Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand."<sup>12</sup>

When answering Gortchakoff's letter of March 7, the English Foreign Secretary took a somewhat different line from that of the Government of India, and in doing so unquestionably weakened the British position. He said that Afghanistan would not fulfill the conditions of a neutral territory such as the two Governments desired to establish because its frontiers were ill-defined, that this uncertainty was sure to lead to disputes between the Russians and the Afghan chiefs and force Russia, however unwillingly, to disregard the arrangement she had entered into. He proposed the Upper Oxus, which was south of Bokhara, as the limitary line which neither Power should permit its forces to cross. "This . . . would leave a large tract of country, apparently desert and marked on the map . . . as belonging to the Khan of Khiva, between Afghanistan, and the territory already acquired by Russia, and, if agreed to, would, it is hoped, remove all fear of future dissention."<sup>13</sup>

With this agreement as to the *principle* of a neutral zone, but disagreement as to its location, the matter rested for a while. The subject was renewed, however, in September, 1869, when Lord Clarendon and Prince Gortchakoff met at Heidelberg. In a conference which lasted several hours,<sup>14</sup> Clarendon again alluded to the Oxus as the most desirable line of demarcation for a neutral ground between the Russian and British possessions. But Gortchakoff demurred, and expressed the hope that that line would not be pressed, since a portion of the country south of the Oxus was claimed by the ruler of Bokhara and its inclusion in the neutral zone might lead to differences between Great Britain and Russia. He urged that Afghanistan be looked upon "as constituting the neutral ground which it was expedient to establish."<sup>15</sup> Clarendon reiterated his objection to Afghanistan because of its uncertain frontiers, and added that the Amir "might attempt to bring under subjection the different Khanates which had formerly belonged to Afghanistan," and which were considered by Russia to be quite independent. Gortchakoff replied that the Amir was at perfect liberty to pursue such a policy, so long as he did not attack the Amir of Bokhara or commit any acts which might be interpreted as hostile to Russia.<sup>16</sup> With this the question of the neutral zone was dropped.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>13</sup>Clarendon to Rumbold, April 17, 1869. *State Papers, 1872-1873*, LXIII, p. 661.

<sup>14</sup>Of the meeting at Heidelberg Clarendon wrote (September 7, 1869): "I have done my Gortchakoff, having met him at Heidelberg as a place equidistant between here and Baden. The conference lasted 3½ hours, and we agreed that it *must* lead to a right good understanding between the Lion and the Bear. Be that as it may, I am glad I went, as we certainly arrived at agreement upon several points. Perhaps, however, the crafty man was only practising upon my youth and innocence." (Quoted in Maxwell, *Life and Letters of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon*, II, p. 361.)

<sup>15</sup>Clarendon to Buchanan, September 3, 1869. *State Papers, 1872-1873*, LXIII, pp. 670-671.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 671.

<sup>17</sup>See Granville's letter to Gladstone, September 30, 1873, given in Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 413-414.

English believed, "historical facts proved . . . were under the domination of the Sovereign of Cabul."<sup>48</sup> In view of this small difference, it was urged that an early decision be reached, and a final solution of the question at issue be effected.<sup>49</sup> Schouvaloff was prepared to make the concession which the English sought to obtain. Whatever might be the merits of the Russian position concerning Badakshan and Wakhan as elaborated by Prince Gortchakoff, the Tsar "was of opinion that such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries, and he was determined that it should not be so."<sup>50</sup>

This concession on the part of the Tsar's personal representative was followed (January 31, 1873) by an official confirmation from Prince Gortchakoff. Expressing gratification that the English Cabinet "continues to pursue in those parts the same object as ourselves, that of ensuring to them peace, and, as far as possible, tranquillity," he relinquished the claim so long held by the Russian Government that Badakshan and Wakhan lay outside the true limits of Afghanistan. This was done, he said, in consideration of the "difficulty experienced in establishing the facts in all their details in those distant parts," "the greater facilities which the British government possesses for collecting precise data,"<sup>51</sup> and, above all, because of the desire of the Russian Government "not to give to this question of detail greater importance than is due to it." Gortchakoff concluded:

We are the more inclined to this act of courtesy as the English Government engages to use all her influence with Shere Ali, in order to induce him to maintain a peaceful attitude, as well as to insist on his giving up all measures of aggression and further conquest. This influence is indisputable. It is based not only on the material and moral ascendancy of England, but also on the subsidies for which Shere Ali is indebted to her. Such being the case, we see in this assurance a real guarantee for the maintenance of peace. . . .

We are convinced that Lord Granville will perceive in it [the Russian concession relative to the disputed territories] a fresh proof of the value which our august Master attaches to the maintenance and consolidation of the most friendly relations with the Government of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.<sup>52</sup>

This dispatch of Prince Gortchakoff concluded the discussions and correspondence which had begun in 1869, and constituted what is known as the Agreement of 1873. What was included in the agreement? Definitely only two things: first, the northern and northwestern frontiers of Afghanistan were established by the European Powers most concerned with the fate of that country. The boundaries, however, were not com-

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Argyll, *The Eastern Question*, II, p. 289.

<sup>51</sup>It will be remembered that the Governor-General of Turkestan had originally been commissioned to investigate the Afghan boundary question because of his proximity to and knowledge of the situation, and the delay upon the part of the Russian Government in making a definite statement was due to its desire to arrive at a deliberate and accurate judgment based on the findings of General Kaufmann. (See above, p. 30.)

<sup>52</sup>Gortchakoff to Brunnov, January 31, 1873. *Parl. Papers*, 1873, LXXV ("Correspondence with Russia respecting Central Asia"), pp. 15-16.

plete, not definitive, not laid down "on the spot." Secondly, England obtained from Russia repeated and positive commitments to the effect that Afghanistan was wholly outside her sphere of influence—a declaration which was later invoked by the English with wearisome frequency and which consistently the Russians avowed.

There is a third point concerning which there has been, and continues to be, much confusion. It is regarding the neutral or "intermediary" zone. The following paragraph from Alexis Krausse's *Russia in Asia* (p. 227) is typical of books of its kind:

The progress of these events [the advance of Russia in Central Asia] caused an amount of uneasiness in England and India which was not to be disarmed by the assurances reiterated from St. Petersburg that the Tsar 'had no desire to add to his dominions.' The news of the fall of Tashkend and Samarcand produced a sensation throughout the breadth of India, where the conquests of Russia were spoken of with bated breath, and the future fate of Hindostan under Russian rule was speculated on. These developments were not wasted on the Government of India, and the notifications made to the Home Government resulted in a formal communication between Lord Clarendon and Prince Gortchakoff as to the desirability of some definite understanding on the subject of future Russian expansions. Lord Clarendon made a proposal which for its absurdity has probably never been surpassed by a Foreign Minister. He urged the desirability of constituting Afghanistan a neutral zone. Gortchakoff jumped at the proposal, replying that the Tsar looked upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence.

Krausse's statement is quite contrary to the facts, and may be dismissed as "that kind of misrepresentation which is the natural result of strong antipathies or of overmastering hobbies."<sup>53</sup> So may many similar statements be so dismissed. On the other hand we read in so authoritative a work as the *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*:<sup>54</sup> "The principle of a neutral zone having been accepted, the boundary of Afghanistan had to be fixed." Here the assertion is not definitely made that Afghanistan was created a neutral zone; but one hardly surmises other than that the boundary which "had to be fixed" was that of the country to be constituted the neutral zone.

As for contemporary opinion, there is considerable evidence of a general belief that a neutral zone had been created. In February, 1873, the Cabinet was questioned in Commons as to whether it was intended "to call upon the Russian Government to define a line beyond which they will not make a permanent advance towards the intermediate zone."<sup>55</sup> It was Disraeli who later pointed out that "the idea that Great Britain and Russia agreed to establish a neutral zone between their respective empires, and that Russia had all this time systematically violated that neutral zone. . . ." <sup>56</sup> was deeply implanted in the British public mind. As for

<sup>53</sup>Argyll, *op. cit.*, II, p. 304.

<sup>54</sup>Vol. III, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup>Hansard, *Parl. Debates*, Third Series, 1873, CCXIV, p. 1034.

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, p. 414.

two Powers treated in this chapter may be concluded with the following statement from Prince Gortchakoff:

Have the goodness to inform his Excellency, [the British Foreign Secretary] by order of our august Master, that we entirely agree in the conclusion [of the British Government] that, while maintaining on either side, the arrangements come to as regards the limits of Afghanistan, which is to remain outside of Russian action, the two Cabinets should regard as terminated the discussions relative to the intermediate zone, which have been recognized as impractical; that, while retaining entire freedom of action, they should be guided by a mutual desire to pay due regard to their respective interests and necessities, by avoiding, as far as possible, any immediate contact with each other, and by any collisions between the Asiatic States placed within the circle of their influence.<sup>2</sup>

This dispatch immediately followed the occupation by Russia of the Khanate of Khokand. Only Afghanistan separated the empires of Tsar and Queen in Asia.

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<sup>2</sup>Gortchakoff to Schouvaloff, February 15, 1876. *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 69.

THE CRISIS OF 1878 AND THE GENESIS OF  
THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

The Granville-Gortchakoff Agreement of 1873 did not settle the Afghan question, nor make an end of the voluminous correspondence of England and Russia concerning that Asiatic State. Indeed the overthrow of the Gladstone Government in 1874 and the return to power of the Conservatives under Disraeli marked the beginning of a period of increased activity, characterized, so far as the Indian frontier was concerned, by the "forward" policy. In Disraeli's Cabinet Lord Derby was for four years Foreign Secretary and Lord Salisbury, for the same period, was Secretary of State for India. Later (March, 1878) Salisbury took over the Foreign Office and was superseded at the India Office by Lord Cranbrook. For Viceroy Lord Lytton was chosen—an appointment which surprised the recipient, so he averred,<sup>1</sup> quite as much as the English public, to whom he was known rather as a man of letters than as a statesman.<sup>2</sup> Lytton's inexperience in Indian affairs, however, made him a particularly available man for the Viceroyalty; for the Government that he was to represent had its own policies, Indian as well as Imperial, and the ruler of India was but to put these into effect.<sup>3</sup> The latter (Imperial) was to be "spirited," and was to be reflected in the former (Indian) which was to be "forward."<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the Disraeli Government aimed to reverse the policy of the Gladstone Government: the Liberals had sought by diplomacy to limit the Russian advance; the Conservatives purposed themselves to advance and thus preclude the further approach of the Russians toward India. Lord Lytton's instructions, while leaving considerable discretion as to the means by which the policy was to be carried out, were quite explicit as to its object.<sup>5</sup> Briefly, the Viceroy was to concede the demands made by the Amir in 1869 and 1873, and, making these concessions, was to insist upon the reception of a British mission in return.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lady Betty Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Marriott, *The English in India*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>3</sup>Describing in a letter to Queen Victoria (June 22, 1877) the measures that were to be taken if war broke out with Russia because of her apprehended occupation of Constantinople, Disraeli wrote: "It is Lord Beaconsfield's present opinion that in such a case Russia must be attacked from Asia, that troops should be sent to the Persian Gulf, and that the Empress of India should order her armies to clear Central Asia of the Muscovites, and drive them into the Caspian. We have a good instrument for this purpose in Lord Lytton, and indeed he was placed there with that view." (Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, VI, p. 155.) See also Gwynn and Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke*, I, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup>Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>The instructions are given in Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-93.

<sup>6</sup>Shere Ali had sought on the occasions referred to (the conferences at Ambala and Simla with Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook respectively) to obtain an alliance with the British to bind them to support him against external attack, and a promise that the British would never



the two empires.<sup>8</sup> He did not intend that these things should come to pass.

Arriving in India, Lord Lytton found the relations between the Indian Government and that of the Amir in a highly unsatisfactory state. A number of factors had conspired to widen the breach between them and to make easier the wedge which the Russians were thought to be driving in the territory avowed by them to be outside their sphere of influence. One was the arbitration by the Indian Government of a boundary dispute between the Amir and the Shah of Persia concerning Seistan, with a settlement that was unacceptable to the Amir.<sup>9</sup> Another was the refusal of the Indian Government to promise its support to Abdullah Jan, installed by the Amir as heir-apparent in preference to an older son, Yakub, who was in revolt against his father. In both instances the Indian Government was placed in an awkward position; for however equitable the settlement of the Seistan boundary question might be, it was sure to be unsatisfactory: indeed equity was the very thing that would make it so.<sup>10</sup> As for Abdullah Jan, his qualities were at best uncertain; and a real danger was involved in an agreement to support, to the exclusion of others, *any* candidate for the Afghan throne. A third and perhaps most important factor was the refusal of the British unequivocally to guarantee the territories of the Amir against external aggression. Such a guarantee the Amir had repeatedly sought in vain, and now the exigencies of the time made it seem to him to be increasingly necessary.

Whether or not the British had pursued a justifiable policy in these matters, the Amir was disgruntled, and the Russians were the logical recipients of the negative sort of friendship that resulted from his feelings. They were naturally not averse to exploiting the advantage which they had so fortuitously gained; and there developed between them and the Amir a correspondence the cordiality of which grew with the increased estrangement of his relations with the British and theirs with the Russians.<sup>11</sup> The existence of such a friendly correspondence between Russian officials and Shere Ali had been intimated by Count Schouvaloff in his conversations with Lord Lytton before the latter's departure for India.

The Viceroy called the attention of the Home Government to the fact that whereas the Amir had at first sought the advice of the British concerning the replies that should be sent to General Kaufmann, he had

<sup>8</sup>See the private letter of Lord Lytton to Lord Cranbrook (August 17, 1878) given in Gathorne-Hardy, *Gathorne Hardy, First Earl Cranbrook, a Memoir*, II, pp. 85 ff.

<sup>9</sup>See Argyll, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 316 ff.; Holdich, *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900*, p. 391; Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>10</sup>The Shah seems to have been equally dissatisfied with the settlement. See Sykes, *Sir Mortimer Durand*, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup>For a statement concerning the origin of these relations, as well as the text of a number of interesting letters exchanged, see Schuyler, *Turkistan*, II, pp. 312 ff. The letters cited were taken by Schuyler from Terentieff's book, *Russia and England in Central Asia*. Schuyler notes (p. 315): "It is worthy of remark that all the letters of General Kaufmann to Shir Ali are accompanied by an English translation, for the greater convenience of the Indian authorities, to whom it is expected they will be transmitted." See also Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, II, pp. 247 ff.; Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 ff.; Gathorne-Hardy, *op. cit.*, II, p. 86.

ceased to do so, and was reported to be holding conferences with the persons by whom the letters were dispatched.<sup>12</sup> He submitted that the time had come when it was expedient that the attention of the Russian Government be seriously called to this correspondence, and that "steps should be taken by Her Majesty's Government to prevent a continuance of proceedings which we cannot but regard as altogether inconsistent with the assurance given by Prince Gortchakow to Lord Clarendon in 1869, and, since then, frequently renewed by the Cabinet at St. Petersburg, that Afghanistan is regarded as 'entirely beyond the sphere of Russian influence.'"<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the reports of friendly correspondence between the Amir and the Russian officials in Turkestan came rumors that the bearers of the letters were remaining in Kabul and were acting in the capacity of agents of the Russian Government. Their alleged purpose was the establishment of treaty relations with the Amir. On October 2, 1876, the Earl of Derby addressed (through Lord Loftus) the Russian Government concerning these allegations as follows:

In my despatch to your Excellency of the 6th ultimo, I enclosed a copy of the Cabul Diaries received from the Indian Government.

You will find on page 10 of those diaries a letter addressed by General Kaufmann to the Ameer of Cabul which appears to have been conveyed to its destination by an Asiatic agent, who still remains at Cabul, and it is reported from other sources that his intentions are to induce Shere Ali to sign an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government as well as a Commercial Treaty.

Although the tone and insinuation of General Kaufmann's letter appear to Her Majesty's Government to be undesirable, the letter itself does not contain any statement of a distinctly objectionable character. Your Excellency will address a note to the Russian Government, reminding them that 'Afghanistan is completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence,' and you will endeavour, if possible, to obtain from the Russian Government a written disclaimer of any intention on their part to negotiate Treaties with Shere Ali without the consent of Her Majesty's Government.<sup>14</sup>

Lord Loftus failed to obtain the "written disclaimer" that was desired. On the other hand M. de Giers, in conversation with the British Ambassador, held that he had no knowledge of any Russian agent's having been sent to the court of the Amir,<sup>15</sup> and subsequently Prince Gortchakoff reiterated that "there was no Russian Agent at Cabul so far as he knew."<sup>16</sup> As for General Kaufmann's letters, they were purely compli-

<sup>12</sup>Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup>Lytton to Salisbury, September 18, 1876. *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX ("Central Asia, No. 1"), pp. 83-84. It was added:

"In venturing to suggest this course for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government, we would represent that the issue more or less involved in the continuance, or discontinuance of the [Russian] correspondence . . . is not one of merely local or Indian, but of Imperial interest, affecting as it does the important question whether the influence of England is to be superseded and replaced by that of Russia at the Court of the Ameer." (*Ibid.*, p. 84.)

In the same dispatch attention was called to the postscript to Sir A. Buchanan's letter to Lord Clarendon, dated November 2, 1869, that Prince Gortchakoff then agreed with Lord Mayo that Russian agents should not visit Kabul. (*Ibid.*, p. 83.)

<sup>14</sup>Derby to Loftus, October 2, 1876. *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 80.

<sup>15</sup>Loftus to Derby, October 19, 1876. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup>Same to same, November 15, 1876. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

mentary and had no political significance. At the same time Gortchakoff denied current rumors to the effect that the Russians were contemplating an expedition against Merv.<sup>17</sup>

These informal denials of the presence of a Russian agent at Kabul and Russian efforts to negotiate treaties with the Amir received formal confirmation in a letter of M. de Giers to Lord Loftus dated December 1, 1876. In addition to an emphatic repudiation of the charges of any improper conduct in Afghanistan on the part of the Russian Government or its agents, a counter charge was brought against the English:

The care which the Cabinet of London devote to watching over the strict observance of the understanding established between them and Russia in 1872 relative to Afghanistan induces the Imperial Ministry, on their side, to mention some information which has reached them from Tashkend, having reference to a simultaneous movement of troops of the Indian army, on the one hand, into the States of Almand Sahib, Ruler of Swat, and of Afghan detachments, on the other hand, into Darvaz, a small independent State beyond the frontiers of Badakshan and Vakhán, and bordering on the north-east on Karategin, both provinces being vassals of the Ameer of Bokhara.

We learn at the same time that considerable armaments are taking place at Herat, in view of an expedition against the Turkomans of Merv.

If these facts received any confirmation," they would constitute a direct infraction of the understanding of 1872, by which Great Britain engaged to dissuade the Ameer from any aggression beyond the zone recognized as being under Afghan dominion.

The Imperial Ministry do not doubt that the British Government will employ all its influence at Cabul to prevent encroachments of this nature.<sup>18</sup>

Interchange of this sort continued: news from India concerning Russian correspondence with the Amir far exceeding "the requirements of courtesy," with its bearers, "regarded and treated by the Amir as agents of the Russian Government,"<sup>20</sup> almost constantly at Kabul; protestations of the innocuous character of such letters ("once or twice a year," according to custom) and denials by the Imperial Government of all knowledge of Russian agents.

Meanwhile events in Europe were running their dramatic course. The Balkan problem led to the Russo-Turkish War and the intensifying of the Anglo-Russian antagonism. Whatever may have been the intentions of the Russian Government as to Central Asia before the events of 1877, there can be no doubt that the British intervention which deprived Russia of the fruits of San Stefano, the dispatch of Indian troops to Malta and the later occupation of Cyprus, caused an increased and specificized activity there. An article appearing in the *Moscow Gazette* of July 19, 1878, reflects the Russian attitude of the time:

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Such confirmation was not received, and later the Russian Government conceded that the information alluded to was based wholly on rumor. (Giers to Loftus, March 5, 1877. *Ibid.*, p. 106.)

<sup>19</sup>Giers to Loftus, December 1, 1876. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup>Lytton to Salisbury, May 3, 1877. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

The time has arrived for Russia to establish her influence over the whole of Central Asia, and this is all the more easy as the Ruler of Afghanistan is not on good terms with England—our foe in Central Asia. The concentration of our influence on the frontiers of the territory of the Empress of India would be a natural answer to the English seizure of Cyprus and all the approaches to India. Such may be the unobtrusive, even peaceable, object of the military operation undertaken by the troops of the Turkestan military circuit. As our correspondent at Berlin remarked the other day—‘In Asia there are two political Powers confronting each other, and they must inevitably come into collision.’ England wishes to be Russia’s nearest neighbour in Asia Minor, and it is only natural, therefore, that Russia, in her turn, should desire to approach somewhat nearer to the English frontiers in India.<sup>21</sup>

In accordance with the “forward” policy of the Lytton Government and the aggravated state of Anglo-Russian relations, a conference was held at Peshawar early in 1877 between representatives of the Governments of the Viceroy and the Amir. The purpose of the meeting, so far as the British were concerned, was to obtain Shere Ali’s promise to accept a British mission to replace the Moslem agent of the Indian Government (an Afghan), who wrote, so Lord Lytton thought, “exactly what the amir tells him.”<sup>22</sup> As early as 1875 Salisbury had written the Viceroy (Lord Northbrook): “It [the unreliability of the information given by the Moslem agent] has the effect of placing upon our frontier a thick covert, behind which any amount of hostile intrigue and conspiracy may be masked. I agree with you in thinking that a Russian advance upon India is a chimera. But I am by no means sure that an attempt to throw the Afghans upon us is so improbable.”<sup>23</sup>

The Peshawar discussions were fruitless. Shere Ali refused to receive an English mission, and cited among the reasons for his refusal the belief that its presence in Afghanistan would be utilized by the Russians as a pretext for dispatching a similar Russian mission.<sup>24</sup> This argument was interpreted by the British as confirming their fear of a loss of influence, for the Amir had apparently come to regard the Russians as on an equal footing with them.<sup>25</sup> For Shere Ali the situation was a most delicate one. Ardently desirous of remaining free from foreign domination, circumstances were apparently going to force him to decide which was the more objectionable, subservience to the British or to the Russians. It was rumored that he was contemplating summoning all the chiefs and leading men, to consult with them as to with which of the two Powers it was desirable that he should ally himself.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Translated in *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX (“Central Asia. No. 1”), p. 141. See also Meyendorff, *Correspondance diplomatique de M. de Staal*, I, pp. 40-41, and Tcharykow, *Glimpses of High Politics*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>22</sup>Salisbury to Disraeli, January 2, 1875. Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, II, p. 71. Cf. Argyll, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 374-375.

<sup>23</sup>Salisbury to Northbrook, February 19, 1875. Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *op. cit.*, II, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup>Enclosure 18 in Northbrook to Salisbury, May 10, 1877. *Parl. Papers*, 1878-79, LVI (“Afghanistan”), p. 181. For an extended and critical account of this conference, see Argyll, *op. cit.*, Chap. XVIII.

<sup>25</sup>*Cambridge History of the British Empire*, V, p. 416.

<sup>26</sup>Extract from Peshawar Diary of Major Cavagnari, June 7, 1878. *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX (“Central Asia. No. 1”), p. 138.

Meanwhile relations between Shere Ali and General Kaufmann had become increasingly intimate, and culminated in June, 1878, in a letter written by the latter informing the Amir "that in these days the relations between the British Government and ours with regard to your Kingdom require deep consideration. As I am unable to communicate my opinion verbally to you I have deputed my agent, Major-General Stolietoff," an officer high in the favor of the Emperor. "He will inform you of all that is hidden in my mind. I hope that you will pay great attention to what he says, and believe him as you would myself, and after due consideration you will give him your reply; meanwhile be it known to you that your union and friendship with the Russian Government will be beneficial to the latter and still more so to you. The advantages of a close alliance with the Russian Government will be permanently evident."<sup>27</sup>

The Government of India was informed of Stolietoff's mission and of the draft treaty which he was said to have with him,<sup>28</sup> and further representations were made by the Home Government concerning them. On July 2, 1878, Lord Loftus interviewed M. de Giers, inquiring whether any Russian representative had been instructed by the Imperial Government at St. Petersburg or by the Governor-General of Turkestan to proceed to Kabul. M. de Giers replied definitely that no such mission had been or was intended to be sent to Kabul, either by the Imperial Government or by General Kaufmann.<sup>29</sup>

The mission of General Stolietoff was, in fact, then on its way, and arrived at Kabul on July 22.<sup>30</sup> It was said that the Amir had protested

<sup>27</sup>Kaufmann to Shere Ali, June, 1878. *Parl. Papers*, 1881, XCVIII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 16.

<sup>28</sup>Two versions of this treaty have come to the attention of the writer. One is that of the British agent at Peshawar (whose information had "been received from an authentic source"); the other is that given by Lord Roberts in his *Forty-one Years in India* (II, p. 477) as "written from memory by Mirza Mahomed Nabbi." Concerning it Lord Roberts writes: "When I inquired of Yakub Khan what had become of the correspondence which must have been carried on between his father [Shere Ali] and the Russians, he declared that he had destroyed it all when on his way to Gandamak; nevertheless, a certain number of letters from Generals Kauffmann and Stolietoff came into my possession, and a draft of the treaty the latter officer brought from Tashkent was made for me from memory by the man who had copied it for Sher Ali, aided by the Afghan official who was told off [*sic*] to be in attendance on Stolietoff, and who had frequently read the treaty." (*Op. cit.*, II, p. 248.) Both versions contain promises of the recognition of the heir-apparent chosen by the Amir and Russian assistance in the event of external attack on Afghanistan; but that of the British agent provides for the quartering of Russian troops in Afghanistan, and, "if it becomes desirable that the Russian Government should send an expedition to wage war in India, the Ameer should furnish supplies to the Russian troops," as well as free passage. (*Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 159.)

<sup>29</sup>Loftus to Salisbury, July 3, 1878. *Parl. Papers*, 1878, LXXX ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 132.

<sup>30</sup>Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

Although de Giers, acting in Gortchakoff's stead during the Chancellor's absence at Berlin, was apparently guilty of unmitigated mendacity, it can not be shown that his misrepresentation of the facts was intentional. Concerning the situation Lord Salisbury wrote to Lord Odo Russell (November 27, 1878):

"Schouvaloff gives a terrible picture of the disorganization of the Russian services—or rather their mutual independence—if one is to believe him. The Emperor is represented as having heard with horror and despair that any one in his service had been guilty of such an offence as fostering rebellious sentiments in the Bulgarians of Macedonia. As for the embassy to Cabul, it appears to have been self-generated. Schouvaloff had heard nothing of it the whole time he was at Berlin—nor during the three weeks afterwards spent at St. Petersburg. Only when he got to Wilbad he saw it in the newspapers. He immediately rushed to Gortchakoff and asked, 'Has there been any mission to Cabul?' Gortchakoff, putting his hand to his brow and reflecting,—'Non, je ne crois pas.'" (Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *op. cit.*, II, p. 345.)

Emphasizing the same idea of the lack of coordination on the part of the Russian services, Lord Dufferin wrote to Lord Salisbury (March 16, 1880): "It would be manifestly futile to base

against the coming of the mission,<sup>31</sup> but he took no military steps to prevent its advance, and received the Russians with honor.<sup>32</sup> According to Lord Roberts' account, on the day before his arrival at Kabul (that is, July 21) Stolietoff received a dispatch from Kaufmann informing him of the settlement at Berlin and warning him not to make any positive promises to the Amir.<sup>33</sup> If such was the case, the warning was disregarded.

The reception of the Russian envoy at Kabul precipitated a crisis.<sup>34</sup> The situation, as brought out in a letter of Shere Ali addressed "to the Russian Emperor," was not unlike that of forty years previous, when the late Amir, "led by sound judgment, preferred the friendship of your Imperial Majesty to that of the English Government,"<sup>35</sup> and was made to suffer for his choice in the events of the following years. As for the Indian Government, it sought and obtained permission for the Viceroy's insisting upon the reception by Shere Ali of a British mission.<sup>36</sup> It happened that the letter announcing the Government's determination to send a mission was received on the same day (August 17) on which occurred the death of Abdullah Jan, the heir-apparent to the throne, and because of this the Amir requested that the matter be deferred.<sup>37</sup> According to the information later given Lord Roberts by Yakub Khan, Stolietoff urged the Amir to prevent the British mission from reaching Kabul while he went to Tashkent to communicate with Kaufmann, who

the safety of the North-Western Frontier of India upon any understanding, stipulation, convention or treaty with the imperial government. I do not mean to imply that the emperor and his ministers would wilfully violate their engagements; but the authority of the Russian executive is so slight, the control it exercises over its distant agents and military chiefs is so unsteady, and its policy is so designedly tentative, while the forces which stimulate the aggressive instincts of the nation are so constant, that little reliance could be ultimately placed upon mere verbal guarantees." (Quoted in *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, V, p. 412.)

See also Schuyler's excellent statement on "the peculiar constitution of the Russian Government" (*op. cit.*, II, pp. 262 ff.) and that concerning the extraordinary powers of the Governor-General of Turkestan (pp. 269-270), and Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, pp. 215 ff.

<sup>31</sup>Lady Betty Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>32</sup>The Duke of Argyll held that it was not at all a matter of choice which led the Amir to receive the mission. In a letter to Mr. Gladstone dated November 4, 1872, he wrote: "The *Times* correspondent from Darjeeling today says the Amir deliberately preferred a Russian alliance. Now, I have seen the official account sent to Lytton of the circumstances under which the Amir received the Russian Mission, and it shows that he did not 'deliberately' receive it. On the contrary, he was very reluctant to receive it, and was only bullied into it." (*Autobiography and Memoirs*, II, p. 330.)

<sup>33</sup>Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 110-111: "On the eve of the day that the Mission entered Tashkent Stolietoff received a despatch from General Kauffmann giving him the heads of the Berlin Treaty, with the following commentary in the handwriting of the Governor-General himself: 'The news be true, it is indeed melancholy;' adding, however, that the Congress had finished its sittings, and that, therefore, the Envoy in his negotiations with the Amir had better refrain from arranging any distinct measures, or making any positive promises, and 'not go generally as far as would have been advisable if war with England had been threatened.'"

<sup>34</sup>It must be noted that the dispatching of missions such as that of Stolietoff was not an extraordinary occurrence, but a more or less regular part of Russian diplomatic activity in Central Asia. See Schuyler, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 270-271.

<sup>35</sup>*Parl. Papers*, 1821, XCVIII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), pp. 19-20.

<sup>36</sup>Beaconsfield deplored the "headstrong counsels" which prevailed during the summer and early fall of 1878 and which were for forcing the hand of the Amir. He wrote (October 2 or 10) to Lady Bradford: "This critical state of affairs need not have happened, and all that has to do with my orders had not been disobeyed. This makes it the more grievous. I wrote to you a month ago I shd. think, that I hoped I had settled the Afghan business, but alas! I did not reckon on distant and headstrong counsels . . ." (Quoted in *Montgomery and Balfour*, *op. cit.*, p. 384.)

<sup>37</sup>Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, p. 113: "This untoward event was taken advantage of to delay answering the Viceroy's letter, but it was not allowed in any way to interfere with the progress of the negotiations with Russia."

tions, the Amir was to receive a guarantee of protection against external aggression. There was added, too, the payment of such a sum of money within a maximum of ten lakhs "as was thought necessary to meet his present wants."<sup>51</sup>

As for Kandahar, that city did not long remain out of the hands of Abdurrahman. Occupied by the British under General Roberts during the summer of 1880 and shortly afterwards evacuated by them, it came under the Amir in the autumn of that year. The Afghan Kingdom was thus once more united under an effective rule.

It is difficult, in conclusion, to avoid noting some remarkable comparisons between the two Afghan wars that have been mentioned. Both were brought on by reason of British susceptibilities concerning real or alleged Russian intrigues in Afghanistan, rather than by any fundamental differences existing between the Governments involved in the wars; in both instances questions of the succession were involved; in both demands were made for the reception of British missions. After both wars, however, the British accepted other than their own candidates to the throne, and after both relinquished their claims to representation at the court of the Amir. Whether anything was actually accomplished by the British in either war was seriously questioned by not a few Englishmen. On the part of the Liberals there was a strong feeling that the Government had gone too far. Militarists and Imperialists were equally inclined to think that it had not gone far enough—that Kandahar, surely, should have been permanently retained.<sup>52</sup> And there were some of various political affiliations and creeds, even in that heyday of imperialism, who on moral grounds took offense at a great Power's attacking a small, weak nation because the Government had decided on a line of action that was to be "spirited" and "forward."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, p. 329.

<sup>52</sup>Among these was the Queen. See her correspondence with Mr. Gladstone on this subject given in Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, II, pp. 133 ff.

<sup>53</sup>See Lyall, *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, I, p. 289. There was a great deal of bitter contemporary comment on Beaconsfield's policies both as to the Balkan question and Central Asia. Mme. Olga Novikoff in her *Russian Memories* (p. 81) quotes Carlyle as referring to English politics as "a sore subject nowadays with our damnable premier."

## THE PENJDEH INCIDENT AND THE DELIMITATION OF THE NORTHWESTERN AFGHAN FRONTIER, 1884-1888

As will be remembered, the British sought in the latter 'sixties and the early 'seventies to reach with Russia some agreement concerning the northern frontier of Afghanistan, and succeeded in having the Oxus accepted as "indicating broadly the limit of the Ameer's sphere of influence."<sup>1</sup> The boundary, however, was not delimited on the spot, was incomplete, and was lacking in the definiteness which would preclude possible misunderstanding in the future. There was, consequently, a disposition to uneasiness on the part of the British and the Afghans when any new Russian advance occurred, and the mutuality of their fears was signalized in 1883 by the formal renewing by the British of their promise of aid to the Amir in case of unprovoked aggression.<sup>2</sup>

The Russians were very active in Central Asia during the 1880's, taking advantage, some have thought, "of the numerous external difficulties of the Gladstone government, and fortified by a secret treaty with Germany. . . ."<sup>3</sup> In the winter of 1880-1881 the Tekke Turkomans were subjugated,<sup>4</sup> and early in 1884, Merv, which was deemed by military men a place of great strategic importance,<sup>5</sup> and which the Russian Government had repeatedly declared to lie outside its range of influence or desire,<sup>6</sup> was occupied and its chiefs were induced to tender their allegiance

<sup>1</sup>Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, III, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>The Viceroy to Abdur Rahman Khan, February 22, 1883. *Parl. Papers*, 1884, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), pp. 72-73. See also *The Life of Abdur Rahman*, II, pp. 127-128.

<sup>3</sup>Cambridge History of the British Empire, V, pp. 422-423. Fitzmaurice says (*The Life of Granville*, II, p. 422): "Although at the time all the facts were not fully known even at the Foreign Office, the situation had been correctly appreciated by Lord Granville as a whole. It hinged on the secret treaty of neutrality which in 1884 Prince Bismarck had concluded with Russia, without the knowledge and behind the backs of the other parties to the Triple alliance, viz. Austria-Hungary and Italy. It was intended to protect Germany in the event of Austria-Hungary becoming reconciled with Russia, or of the long talked-of alliance between France and Russia taking effect. Russia, however, interpreted this treaty, which secured her western frontier, as also giving her a free hand in Asia, and Prince Bismarck gave a tacit approval, as part of the new policy, to a system of persisting annoyance against Great Britain." On this point see the illuminating letter of Bismarck to the German Emperor dated May 27, 1885. (*Die Grosse Politik*, IV, pp. 124-126.)

<sup>4</sup>This was the work of the illustrious General Skobelev, who, in the taking of Daghil Tepe and the pursuit of the fugitives after its capture, was responsible for the death (according to his own estimate) of 20,000 men, women, and children. See Rose, *Development of the European Nations, 1870-1914*, II, p. 126; Baddeley, *Russia in the 'Eighties*, p. 96; Lyall, *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, I, pp. 317-318.

<sup>5</sup>Vambéry (*The Coming Struggle for India*, p. 51) calls attention to the fact that "all the Asiatic conquerors who burst forth from Central Asia with the open intention to attack and conquer India" had previously occupied Merv, and gives the opinions of a number of prominent English officers in support of his own estimate of the importance of the oasis.

There was obviously great misapprehension in England as to just what Merv was. It continued to be associated by some with the "Queen of the World" idea; by others with the Marghiana of classical antiquity. As a matter of fact there was at the time no city of Merv at all, and there had been none, previous to the Russian conquest of the Turkomans, for more than a hundred years. See Dobson, *Russia's Railway Advance into Central Asia*, p. 172, and Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, pp. 105 ff.

<sup>6</sup>The last important diplomatic assurance of the reign of Alexander II was that given by M. de Giers to Lord Dufferin as to Russia's resolution not to occupy Merv: "Not only do we not want to go there, but, happily, there is nothing which can require us to go there." (Quoted in Rose, *op. cit.*, II, p. 127-128.) As late as April, 1882, M. de Giers assured Sir Edward Thorne-



obtaining the adherence of the British Government to this principle. Now the ethnical basis better suited the Russian interests; for, after the conquest of the Tekke Turkomans, the Russians could contend with much cogency that the tranquillity of the Turkoman country was impossible of accomplishment unless *all* the Turkomans were brought under their control. Specifically, it was held that should the Sarik population in the East remain independent or under Afghan rule, their nomad habits and plundering instincts would certainly result in complications between Russia and Afghanistan, and render impossible a settled rule among those tribes that had already recognized Russian authority.<sup>22</sup>

While there was much to be said in favor of this point of view,<sup>23</sup> it held its dangers for a country in which the populations were not settled, but nomadic both by reason of custom and necessity.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore the English critics of Russian policy were not slow to perceive that the twenty-year Russian march in Central Asia had produced a pragmatic change in the point of view of the Russian Government, which in 1864 had expressed a strong belief in "*les conditions géographiques et politiques qui sont fixes et permanentes.*"<sup>25</sup>

The British, eager to effect with Russia a binding agreement, appointed as their Chief Commissioner Sir Peter Lumsden, a member of the India Council and an officer of long standing. The Russian Government after some delay named General Zelenoi.<sup>26</sup> The work of the Boundary Commission, however, did not begin auspiciously. Lumsden and his party arrived on the spot in the fall of 1884, as arranged, but they found no Russian delegation there. Instead they found at Put-i-Khatun, some forty miles south of Sarakhs, a picket of Russian cossacks.<sup>27</sup> Zelenoi's failure to arrive at the appointed time was explained by the St. Petersburg Government as being due to illness<sup>28</sup> (a strictly diplomatic one, the British suspected),<sup>29</sup> and later it was learned that because of the lateness of the season nothing could be done before the following spring.<sup>30</sup>

In December the Russian Government sought to obtain British agreement to the essential points of a series of proposals, among which was the claim that Penjdeh should be independent of the Afghan Amir.<sup>31</sup> This fertile district was regarded by the British as lying within the

<sup>22</sup>*Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 2"), p. 148 (Inclosure in No. 182), and Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, I, p. 145.

<sup>23</sup>See Chamberlain's letter to Dilke (April 4) quoted in Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, I, p. 571.

<sup>24</sup>Lyaill, *op. cit.*, II, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup>See the Gortchakoff Circular of 1864.

<sup>26</sup>Other members of the British delegation were Colonel Patrick Stewart and Colonel J. West Ridgeway, Foreign Under-Secretary to the Indian Government. In the Russian group, in addition to Zelenoi, were Major Alikhanoff and M. Lessar.

<sup>27</sup>Lumsden to Granville, November 9, 1884. *Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 2"), p. 102.

<sup>28</sup>Granville to Thornton, October 24, 1884. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>29</sup>Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, p. 421.

<sup>30</sup>Thornton to Granville, October 2, 1884. *Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 2"), p. 87.

<sup>31</sup>Granville to Thornton, December 9, 1884. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

Afghan sphere, evidence to that fact having been collected and presented to the Russian Government on the first intimations that Russia desired it to be included within its own sphere.<sup>32</sup> At the same time complaints were made by the Russians of Afghan encroachments in the Turkoman country.<sup>33</sup> Granville took the position that all such questions should be settled by the Delimitation Commission. The Russians, on the other hand, insisted that a definite zone should be established by the Governments at London and St. Petersburg and that the Commissioners should confine their activities to that zone. As time went on the differences between the British and Russian points of view, notwithstanding minor concessions on the part of the British, created a deadlock, and for a time it looked as though the efforts at delimitation would completely break down.

Meanwhile the Russian forces had been advancing along the Afghan frontier, occupying a position near the town of Penjdeh and establishing a post at Put-i-Khatun. Later the Zulfikar Pass was occupied. The Russians refused to withdraw from these positions,<sup>34</sup> where their proximity to the Afghan troops caused the English to fear collisions between them. Nor was the London Government greatly tranquilized by M. de Giers's expression of confidence that a collision would not occur unless the Afghans attacked the Russians;<sup>35</sup> for it was known that the Afghans were restive and would not be inclined to permit the Russians to advance farther without resistance.<sup>36</sup> By March, 1885, the situation had become acute. Queen Victoria sought to prevent a conflict by the interposition of her personal influence, and telegraphed Tsar Alexander (March 4) asking him to do everything possible to avoid the misfortunes that might follow an engagement between the Russian and Afghan troops.<sup>37</sup> At the same time the Indian Government received orders from London to have an army corps in readiness with which to defend Herat should the course of events justify such action,<sup>38</sup> and Sir Peter Lumsden was informed that the Government held that any further advance of the Russian troops should be resisted by the Afghans.<sup>39</sup>

On March 30 the apprehended collision occurred. The Afghans occupied a position from which they refused to withdraw,<sup>40</sup> and in the

<sup>32</sup>Russian investigations revealed, on the other hand, that a year previous "no single Afghan" was found at Penjdeh, and "Russia has therefore a right to expect that the oasis of Penjdeh should become hers." (From an article in the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*, quoted in Baddeley, *op. cit.*, p. 211.)

<sup>33</sup>Granville to Thornton, December 9, 1884. *Parl. Papers*, LXXXVII ("Central Asia No. 2"), p. 116.

<sup>34</sup>Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, p. 423.

<sup>35</sup>Thornton to Granville, March 5, 1885. *Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia No. 2"), p. 164. See also Guedalla, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 340-341.

<sup>36</sup>Lumsden to Granville, March 1, 1885. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>37</sup>"Je fais appel à vos bons sentiments, cher frère, pour dire tout ce qui vous est possible pour prévenir les malheurs qui pourraient s'ensuivre d'un conflit armé entre les troupes Russes et Afghans." (Quoted in Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, p. 424.)

<sup>38</sup>*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, III, p. 189.

<sup>39</sup>Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 421-422. See also Holdich, *op. cit.*, pp. 120 ff., and Gwynn and Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 115 ff.

<sup>40</sup>Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

Precariously surviving its problems in Asia and Africa,<sup>65</sup> the Gladstone Ministry was defeated on a budget question and resigned in June, 1885. Upon Lord Salisbury's taking office the consideration of the Afghan question was resumed. Prolonged and involved discussions ensued concerning the area denoted by the name "Zulfikar,"<sup>66</sup> which, by the consent of the Russian Government, was to be included within the Afghan territory. Specifically, the question was, How far to the north of the pass should the Afghan frontier lie? The British Government had made commitments to the Amir on the basis of the Russian promise, and now demanded that the Russians accept a limitary line that would make their fulfilment possible.<sup>67</sup> The Russians were pertinacious, and by August it looked as though another impasse had been reached.<sup>68</sup> A compromise was effected, however, and incorporated in a Protocol which was signed by Salisbury and Staal on September 10.<sup>69</sup> The projected arbitration concerning the Penjdeh incident, which had served its purpose during Gladstone's administration, was suffered to lapse and was not heard of again.<sup>70</sup>

Salisbury's short-lived Government came to an end in November and Gladstone returned to Power. Defeated on the question of Home Rule, however (July, 1886), he was again superseded by Salisbury; and it was during the period of Salisbury's second Government that the question of the northwestern frontier of Afghanistan was finally settled on the basis of the Protocol of September, 1885.

For the task of delimitation on the spot Colonel Ridgeway was appointed to succeed Sir Peter Lumsden, whose relations with the London Government had not been amicable,<sup>71</sup> and, on the Russian side, Colonel Kuhlberg succeeded General Zelenoi. The reconstituted Joint Commission began its work at Zulfikar on the Heri Rud in the fall of 1885, and continued till the following summer.<sup>72</sup> By that time the group had nearly reached Khojah Saleh on the Amu Daria; but due to irreconcilable differences of opinion as to the exact point at which the line should meet the river, the Governments concerned agreed to recall the Commissioners

<sup>65</sup>The Gladstone Ministry was seriously disrupted by the strain of African and Central Asian affairs, threats of resignation coming from first one Minister, then another. See Morley, *op. cit.*, III, p. 185, and Gwynn and Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 117.

<sup>66</sup>*Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 4"), pp. 41-72, and Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 227 ff.

<sup>67</sup>Salisbury to Thornton, July 1, 1885. *Parl. Papers*, 1884-85, LXXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 4"), p. 50.

<sup>68</sup>Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>69</sup>See Appendix II.

<sup>70</sup>See Baddeley, *op. cit.*, p. 223, and Gwynn and Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 121.

<sup>71</sup>Lumsden, who seems to have favored a declaration of war immediately after the Penjdeh incident, was recalled soon after it occurred. His attitude of insubordination was sharply rebuked by Lord Granville, who "thought it right to tell Sir Peter that the tone of many of his communications had been such as in a rather long official experience he never remembered as between an officer employed and his official chief." (Fitzmaurice, *op. cit.*, II, p. 441.)

<sup>72</sup>The details of the delimitation are recorded in *Parl. Papers*, 1887, LXIII ("Central Asia. No. 2"). It has not seemed desirable, if indeed possible, even to summarize the highly technical questions with which the Joint Commission dealt, such as water supply, pasturage, topography, shifting populations, etc.

and, on the basis of the data collected on the spot, to enter upon direct negotiations for the purpose of solving the pending questions.<sup>73</sup> Differences were composed, and on July 22, 1887, the final Protocol was signed at St. Petersburg by Colonel Ridgeway and M. Zinovieff, Head of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>74</sup> An exchange of notes on August 3 rendered the instrument operative.<sup>75</sup>

After the signing of the Protocol there yet remained the task of the local demarcation by a Mixed Commission of the frontier agreed upon,<sup>76</sup> and the rectification of certain portions of the frontier not admitted in the Protocol to be definitive. This work was accomplished by a Commission of which the chief members were Lieutenant-Colonel Yate and Captain Komaroff, and the Protocols signed by them were confirmed by an exchange of notes between the British and Russian Governments on June 12, 1888.<sup>77</sup>

The northwestern Afghan frontier was thus established after a long period of diplomacy, research, and technical execution. The actual work of delimitation and demarcation required almost four years and involved the labor of hundreds of men. The idea of the delimitation, however, had been conceived much earlier, and had had its first substantive results in the agreement of January, 1873, the purport of which, it was constantly agreed, should be observed in the later delimitation procedure.<sup>78</sup>

On the whole the work seemed well done. If the British had been forced to make what appeared to some to be unwarranted and humiliating concessions, they had at least obtained the much-desired "hard granite of a legal compact" with their adversary in Central Asia, and the sense of security that accompanied it. The Russians had every cause for gratification, with their extended frontiers and their almost uninterrupted series of diplomatic victories. Even the Amir, so innocent a party to the whole affair, expressed his approval and warmly thanked those who had added this measure of definiteness to his territorially uncertain dominions.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup>Morier to Vianazly, August 24, 1886. *Parl. Papers*, 1887, LXIII ("Central Asia. No. 2"), p. 166.

<sup>74</sup>The text of the Protocol is given in *Parl. Papers*, 1887, LXIII ("Central Asia. No. 1").

<sup>75</sup>*Parl. Papers*, 1887, LXIII ("Central Asia. No. 2"), pp. 377-378.

<sup>76</sup>Article VI of the Protocol reads: "The frontier agreed upon shall be locally demarcated by a Mixed Commission, according to the signed Maps. In case the work of demarcation should be delayed, the line traced on the Maps shall nevertheless be considered binding by the two Governments." (*Parl. Papers*, 1887, LXIII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), p. 7.)

<sup>77</sup>*Parl. Papers*, 1888, LXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), pp. 2-3.

<sup>78</sup>That is, that "Afghanistan" was conceived as comprising such territories of the Amir Dost Mohammed as had been under the effective rule of his successor Sher Ali, and second, that Afghanistan was recognized as being outside the Russian sphere of influence.

<sup>79</sup>The Amir to the Viceroy, August 16, 1887. *Parl. Papers*, 1888, LXXVII ("Central Asia. No. 1"), pp. 20-21. See also *The Life of Abdur Rahman*, II, pp. 152-153.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PAMIRS QUESTION AND THE AGREEMENT OF 1895

With the signing of the Protocol in 1886 and the subsequent demarcation considered in the previous chapter, the most pregnable frontier of Afghanistan—the northwest—was definitely established, and it was hoped that the "Afghan question," so far as it concerned the relations of England and Russia, was permanently closed. But for only a short time the question was in abeyance, it being revived during the administration of Lord Lansdowne as Viceroy, which began in 1888. The relations of the Viceroy and the Amir were consistently unfriendly<sup>1</sup>—a situation which experience had shown was likely to be attended by complications involving Great Britain and Russia. So it was in the 1890's.<sup>2</sup> The new phase of the question was raised in a quarter which, by reason of its supposed inaccessibility, had been thought to lie outside the danger zone.

It will be recalled that when the agreement of January, 1873, was concluded, the northern limits of the Amir's dominion were defined with a considerable degree of laxity, due to the avowed lack of accurate geographic data with respect to the territories involved.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a considerable part of the northern frontier was left in this indeterminate state after the delimitation effected in the '80's, which established only the boundary between the Heri Rud and the Oxus. The region to the east remained undemarcated and largely unknown, the lofty heights of the "Roof of the World" affording, the British believed, a natural barrier against attack that was practically absolute.<sup>4</sup>

As a matter of fact the Russians had for some time been active in the Pamirs. As early as 1876 the Russian officer Skobelev had conducted an expedition to the Alai Mountains as a result of which the northern portion of the Pamir region was annexed to the Tsar's dominions.<sup>5</sup> After

<sup>1</sup>The specific source of irritation between the Viceroy and the Amir grew out of the former's refusal to negotiate concerning the newly constructed British railway to Chaman ("right on the borders of Afghanistan"), which, together with British "fortifications and preparations," aroused fears in Afghanistan "that the English railway was going to enter Kandahar, and the English army was making a Charhai (an attack) on Kabul." (*The Life of Abdur Rahman*, II, p. 135.) Lord Lansdowne's position relative to the matter is given in a letter to Lord Cross (Secretary of State for India) quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 67-68. Lansdowne had a very low opinion of the Amir, and on one occasion referred to him as a "cantankerous and suspicious old savage." (Newton, *op. cit.*, p. 106.)

<sup>2</sup>Lady Gwendolen Cecil maintains that the influence of Bismarckian diplomacy was an active factor in the revival of Anglo-Russian antagonism in Central Asia in the 1890's: that "British interests supplied the sacrificial offering" on the altar of Russo-German conciliation. (*Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, III, p. 221.) For the documentary basis for Lady Cecil's statement, see *Die Grosse Politik*, VII, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>See Chap. II.

<sup>4</sup>The Amir did not think so, and at Rawal Pindi (1885) urged the British occupation of the Pamirs to prevent their occupation by the Russians. (*The Life of Abdur Rahman*, II, p. 131.) Lord Curzon spoke of the passes as "lofty but available." (*Russia in Central Asia*, p. 297.)

<sup>5</sup>For an account of the Russian advance in this quarter, see Vambéry's articles, "Russia, India, and Afghanistan," (*Quarterly Review*, Vol. CLXXV, pp. 507-537) and "The Russian Advance in the Pamirs" (*New Review*, Vol. VII, pp. 262-270). Vambéry, one of the most prolific writers on the Central Asian question, must be read with caution, however. While he was fairly accurate as to the facts of the case, his extreme Russophobia detracts from the value of his many interesting articles and books dealing with the Middle East.





that time Russian agents were busily engaged in exploring the head waters of the Oxus and adding to the scant geographic knowledge of that rugged country.<sup>6</sup> With characteristic thoroughness the explorations were prosecuted, and "glowing accounts of the benefits of Russian rule and the power of the Great White Czar" were spread among the peoples occupying the Pamir region. The Pamir itself having been explored, the Russians pushed farther afield, and a Cossack officer, Grombchevsky, "even marched across the Hindu Kush and began to intrigue with the petty chieftains on the northern borders of Kashmir."<sup>8</sup>

These explorers attracted but little attention until the fall of 1891. At that time an English officer, Captain Younghusband, who was on special duty in the Intelligence Department of the Indian Government and who was at the time engaged in exploring the country to the north of the Himalayas, met a Russian force under Colonel Yanoff in the Wakhan Valley at the deserted village of Bozai Gumbaz.<sup>9</sup> The first meeting of the English and Russian officers was friendly, but pleasant relations were soon terminated when Yanoff announced that he had received orders from the Governor-General of Turkestan to arrest Younghusband and conduct him to Marghilan, unless he gave written promise to leave the neighborhood at once and "not to travel in what the Russian officer styled 'newly acquired Russian territory.'"<sup>10</sup> Yielding to superior force, Younghusband left Bozai Gumbaz and returned to the Taghdum-bash Pamir, where he learned that the Russians had crossed the Hindu Kush by the Korabhut Pass, and after journeying for some distance through the Yakhun Valley district of Chitral, had recrossed the Hindu Kush and traveled northward through Afghan territory to the Alichur Pamir.<sup>11</sup>

The news of Captain Younghusband's expulsion was angrily received in England,<sup>12</sup> and denounced as a "distinct breach of the promises made by the Russian Government, and an infringement of the boundary line as agreed to between England and Russia in 1873."<sup>13</sup> For whatever may have been the ambiguities of the frontier agreed upon at that time, it was held that Russia could not, by any possible interpretation of the

<sup>6</sup>Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Asia*, pp. 180-181. The question of the source of the Oxus seems to have been almost as controversial a one among geographically minded persons in the latter nineteenth century as that of the source of the Nile at a somewhat earlier date. Lord Curzon conducted a thorough investigation during his explorations in 1894, as did the Joint Commission in 1895. Lord Curzon's findings are given in his monograph entitled, "The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus," which appeared serially in the *Geographical Journal*, July, August, and September, 1896 (Vol. VIII); a summary of the Report of the Boundary Commission appeared in the same journal (January, 1899, Vol. XIII, pp. 50-56) under the title, "The Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission."

<sup>7</sup>*Russia's March Towards India*, II, p. 258.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* See also Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, II, p. 446, and the *Annual Register* for 1892, pp. 243-244.

<sup>9</sup>*Russia's March Towards India*, p. 259.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 260. See also Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, p. 446.

<sup>11</sup>*Russia's March Towards India*, II, p. 260. See Meyendorff, *Correspondance diplomatique de M. de Staal*, II, p. 159. (Morier to Giers, January 25, 1892.)

<sup>12</sup>Morier to Giers, January 25, 1892. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 157-160.

<sup>13</sup>Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, p. 446.



Agreement of 1873, lay claim to territory lying south of the branch of the Oxus "which takes its rise in Lake Victoria (Sir-i-kul)."<sup>14</sup> From the point of view of international law, the Russian officer had violated "les règles les plus élémentaires";<sup>15</sup> and what was worse, had ostensibly done so on the order of the Imperial Cabinet.<sup>16</sup>

The immediate result of the episode was a British campaign against the Chief of Hunza, who had declared himself in favor of Russia;<sup>17</sup> the more consequential was the reopening of the Central Asian question in 1892, and the beginning of a series of negotiations which, though contentious and protracted, led the English and Russians one step further in their progress toward colonial conciliation.

The situation during the years 1892-1895 is interesting as showing in more striking fashion than previous ones the antithetical views of those whose desires were peaceful and conciliatory, and embraced considerations of international scope, and of those whose point of view was determined by immediate practicality and expediency. Specifically, in a more emphatic way than previously the demands of military circles made themselves felt, and clashed with the pacific sentiments of civil authorities. Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky speaks of Anglo-Russian relations as "illuminating" from this angle, and as revealing "a changing trend in Russian foreign policy."<sup>18</sup> This change he attributes to the death of Alexander III and to the advent of new and less able Ministers, and a consequent break in the "methodic cautiousness" that had characterized Asiatic policy during the time of Gortchakoff and Giers.<sup>19</sup> The conflicting aims of the War Ministry and those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are repeatedly brought out in the *Correspondance* of M. de Staal. In the midst of the Pamirs discussion (August, 1893) Count Kapnist, temporarily in charge of foreign affairs, referring to the War Minister, Vanovsky, wrote in exasperation, "L'animal est souvent obstiné comme un âne!"<sup>20</sup> Indeed the letters exchanged between the Foreign Office at St. Petersburg and the Russian Ambassador at London are replete with personalities.

The events alluded to indicated the desirability of effecting a "délimitation légale" in the new danger zone, and M. de Giers agreed with Sir Robert Morier that an agreement was necessary "pour constituer un

<sup>14</sup>*Russia's March Towards India*, II, p. 261. See also Schuyler, *Turkistan*, II, pp. 267-268.

<sup>15</sup>Morier to Giers, January 25, 1892. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p. 158. On February 10, 1892, M. de Staal wrote to Count Kapnist, Chief of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Pour ce qui est de l'affaire des Pamirs, je partage . . . votre opinion. . . . L'expulsion des officiers anglais a été un abus de force absolument gratuit." (Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p. 155.)

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>17</sup>Roberts, *op. cit.*, II, p. 446.

<sup>18</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.* The latter was in ill health during the period of the Pamirs negotiations, which were conducted for the most part by subordinates. He died in January, 1895.

<sup>20</sup>Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p. 223.

territoire sur lequel on peut revendiquer des droits."<sup>21</sup> He admitted further that a serious situation existed concerning territorial possessions and spheres of influence which could be definitely settled only by a commission of delimitation—a thing "que nous demandons depuis longtemps."<sup>22</sup>

If, as ten years previous, the Russians readily agreed to cooperate with the English in a delimitation of the Afghan frontier—indeed, proposed such action—they also, as previously, delayed the ready accomplishment of the task. In the summer of 1892, during the progress of the Anglo-Russian discussions, the Russian Foreign Office and War Office agreed, on the urgent demands of the latter, to establish Russian dominion over the whole of the Pamirs.<sup>23</sup> M. de Staal recognized the danger to amicable relations between the two countries inherent in such an undertaking, and thought it in conformity with Russian interests to avoid provocation.<sup>24</sup> His plan was, therefore, to continue the conversations, placating the English by assuring them of the perfect discipline of the Russian troops, which would prevent untoward action against the Afghans,<sup>25</sup> and at the same time to seek to moderate the demands of the Russian War Office. In accomplishing the former, Staal felt that he was being aided by the political crisis in England, which, he believed, would for the time being obscure the issue of the Russian advance "dans la région des Pamirs."<sup>26</sup>

The "political crisis" referred to resulted in the coming to power of the Liberals; and conversations between M. de Staal and Lord Rosebery, who assumed the Foreign Office, were begun. Rosebery at first evinced little interest in the Pamirs, and freely admitted that though he had located the region on the map, his knowledge of the question did not extend beyond that.<sup>27</sup> Staal explained to him that the chief reason for the Russian advance was the Chinese encroachments "dans ces parages."<sup>28</sup> He added that he considered it extremely desirable that the two Powers prevent their frontiers from touching—that that was the only way in which conflict could be avoided, and a feeling of "sécurité réciproque" be established.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Morier to Giers, January 25, 1892. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>22</sup>Giers to Morier, January 29, 1892. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>23</sup>Staal to Giers, July 12, 1892. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>25</sup>Staal to Chichkine, July 27, 1892. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>26</sup>Staal to Giers, August 9, 1892. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>27</sup>Same to same, August 23, 1892. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Lord Crewe in his *Rosebery* leads us to believe that the Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister) was never seriously concerned with the question of Russian advance in Central Asia, and makes no specific reference to the Pamirs question. (See Chaps. XIV-XVII, *passim*, especially p. 412.) The extensive correspondence of M. de Staal forces one to a contrary view.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* For a consideration of the possible connection between Yanoff's expedition to the Pamirs and the general diplomatic situation in Europe, particularly the Bulgarian question, see Langer, *The Franco-Russian Alliance*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

The idea of maintaining a buffer between the English and Russian possessions was thus continued in the thinking of representatives of the two Governments. It was further expressed by Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for India, who thought the too great proximity of the Powers brought about by the Russian advance in the Pamirs productive of "alarmes à chaque pas et de continuel froissements."<sup>30</sup> Why should the Powers expose themselves to these dangers, when "un peu de bonne volonté et d'esprit de conciliation"<sup>31</sup> would suffice to preclude such injurious and unnecessary friction? M. de Staal said that the Russians were in perfect agreement with Lord Kimberley. He added, however, that they (the Russians) were remaining within the limits established by "nos arrangements antérieurs,"<sup>32</sup> and were actuated only by a desire to protect their newly acquired territory and maintain their prestige by proving themselves "pas indifférents aux impiétements des Afghans ou des Chinois."<sup>33</sup>

In January, 1893, Lord Rosebery again brought up the subject of the Afghan delimitation, citing among other reasons for the immediate necessity of an agreement the forthcoming appearance of the *Blue Books* and the unfavorable impression on Parliament of their silence concerning the Pamirs question.<sup>34</sup> At this time he expressed the opinion that British interests, while not extending beyond the chain of the Hindu Kush, necessitated British control of the northern as well as the southern slopes,<sup>35</sup> and reiterated his belief that the importance of the question demanded that a mixed commission be dispatched as soon as the season would permit.<sup>36</sup> He added that should the Imperial Government refuse to collaborate in such a project, the British would feel justified in undertaking it alone.<sup>37</sup> Sir Robert Morier had been instructed so to inform the Russian Cabinet.<sup>38</sup> M. de Staal replied that if such a step were taken, the Russian Government would be obliged to reserve full liberty of action.<sup>39</sup>

At St. Petersburg the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consulted in March, 1893, with representatives of the Ministry of War on the line to follow. M. de Staal was present at these negotiations and acted, so Meyendorff tells us, along with Giers, Chichkine, and Kapnist, in the rôle of mediator between England and the Russian War Ministry.<sup>40</sup> At the same time it

<sup>30</sup>Staal to Chichkine (not dated, but "probablement octobre 1892"). Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Staal to Chichkine, January 25, 1893. *Ibid.*, p. 201. The British Cabinet was under fire at this time, being accused of secret diplomacy (which had "produced the First Afghan War") and of indifference to the interests of Afghanistan and China in relation to the Pamirs question. (Hansard, *Parl. Debates*, Fourth Series, 1893, VIII, pp. 673-674, and XI, pp. 1775 ff.)

<sup>35</sup>Staal to Chichkine, January 25, 1893. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p. 202.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 194. ("Sommaire," 1893.)

appears that Lord Rosebery, impatient to conclude the negotiations, found himself in an analogous position relative to the India Office, which Staal suspected of desiring the failure of the pourparlers.<sup>41</sup>

On returning to London Staal resumed his conversations with Rosebery, a summary of which he telegraphed to his Government on April 25. Unfortunately Meyendorff has not seen fit to include it in the *Correspondance*. But Rosebery's claims were evidently deemed extravagant, for the communication plunged Kapnist "dans la stupeur,"<sup>42</sup> and elicited from him comments that were clearly not intended to be complimentary: "Votre télégramme . . . prouve une chose que nous savons depuis longtemps: combien les Anglais, même sans être chauvins, sont impudents dans leurs exigences."<sup>43</sup> Concerning the threatened "commission britannique d'exploration dans les contrées du Pamir," Rosebery moderated his earlier declaration, since he had received from the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg assurance that the Russian Government would dispatch no further expeditions to the Pamirs during the period of the negotiations.<sup>44</sup>

A later conversation was devoted to the more general question of British and Russian spheres of influence in Central Asia. Lord Rosebery said to M. de Staal that the British Government was not disposed to admit "que tout ce qui se trouvait en dehors des limites afghanes revenait, *ipso facto*, à la sphère d'influence de la Russie."<sup>45</sup> Staal replied that the Russians had in reality made no such claim, but did reserve liberty of action in the rest of Central Asia.<sup>46</sup> When Rosebery observed that such was also the case with England, Staal said that it was this fact, that the possessions of the two countries were gradually approaching each other, which necessitated their "liberté réciproque" being limited by means of an "*entente commune*." Only such an arrangement, based on the interests of the two countries, could insure stability.<sup>47</sup> To Staal's proposition Lord Rosebery recalled a suggestion, previously made by him, of a delimitation having "pour base une ligne qui se dirigerait du lac Victoria vers l'Est pour aboutir à la frontière chinoise."<sup>48</sup> Such a line, he thought, would answer the conditions outlined by the Russian Ambassador.<sup>49</sup>

Count Kapnist considered M. de Staal unnecessarily generous in averring that the Russian Government did not claim, *ipso facto*, "*tout au moins dans la sphère de notre influence, les territoires n'appartenant pas à l'Afghanistan*."<sup>50</sup> Such a condition, he thought, was the logical im-

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>Kapnist to Staal, April 27, 1893. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>44</sup>Staal to Chichkine, May 3, 1893. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>45</sup>Same to same, May 31, 1893. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Kapnist to Staal, June 8, 1893. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria" were to be divided "by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near its eastern extremity," should follow a mountainous course to the Chinese frontier. The line was to be marked out "and its precise configuration" settled by a "Joint Commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort not exceeding that which is strictly necessary for its proper protection." The British Government was to "arrange with the Ameer of Afghanistan as to the manner in which His Highness shall be represented on the Commission." The essence of the agreement is contained in Clauses 4 and 5:

4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the above line of demarcation.

5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Ameer of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or forts shall be established in it.

The execution of the agreement was "contingent upon the evacuation by the Ameer of Afghanistan of all the territories now occupied by His Highness on the right bank of the Panjah, and on the evacuation by the Ameer of Bokhara of that portion of Darwaz which lies to the south of the Oxus." The British and Russian Governments agreed to "use their influence respectively with the two Ameers."

As has been pointed out, Sir Mortimer Durand's mission in 1893 had resulted in the concessions by Abdurrahman which the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1895 predicated as requisite to "the execution of the Agreement." It was not to be supposed that the Amir of Bokhara, whose sovereignty had been for years a fictitious one, would effectually oppose the cession of territory south of the Oxus held by him. The way was clear, therefore, for the demarcation by the Joint Commission, and this work was completed with dispatch before the end of the year. The error of sending a veritable army with the Commission, as in 1884, was avoided alike by the British and the Russians, and the work proceeded with "a feeling of good-fellowship between the two camps which was never . . . disturbed, whatever might be the changes and deviations of the political weather cock."<sup>71</sup> Writing picturesquely of the completion of the work, Sir Thomas Holdich, chief surveyor for the British group, says that having carried the demarcation eastward as far as the difficult terrain of the country would permit, it was "thence officially projected into space where . . . no pillars or markstones could be raised to witness it. Amidst the voiceless waste of a vast white wilderness—20,000 feet above

<sup>71</sup>Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

the sea, absolutely inaccessible to man and within the ken of no living creature but the Pamir eagles—there the three great empires actually meet. It is a fitting trijunction. No god of Hindu mythology ever occupied a more stupendous throne."<sup>72</sup>

The Agreement of 1895 and the demarcation for which it provided constituted the last step in the delimitation of the Afghan frontier. By the agreement of that year the buffer principle was continued: Eastern Wakhan, as Durand had gotten the Amir to agree in advance, was constituted Afghan territory. "Not an imposing buffer," says Holdich, "this long attenuated arm of Afghanistan reaching out to touch China with the tips of its fingers";<sup>73</sup> but nevertheless the territory of a sovereign ruler, violation of which might be regarded as *casus belli*.

The Pamirs Agreement, though of itself probably not an important diplomatic event, must be regarded as a link in an important chain of events.<sup>74</sup> Notwithstanding hostile voices that opposed *rapprochement* and preached the impossibility of colonial accommodation between Great Britain and Russia, another amicable agreement *had* been reached, and another step taken toward an ultimate *entente cordiale*, the importance of which was to dwarf the train of events out of which it grew.

<sup>72</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 293-294. There was, in reality, no trijunction, and the three empires do not "actually meet." The buffer prevented that.

<sup>73</sup>Holdich says of the "long attenuated arm": "It is only eight miles wide at one part, and could be ridden across in a morning's ride. It presents no vast physical obstacle to an advance of any sort; physical obstacles, however, are not wanting, but they lie in the Indian side, and they are rude enough and difficult enough to answer all possible purposes. It is a political intervention—a hedge, as it were—over which Russia cannot step without violating Afghanistan, and the violation of Afghanistan may (or may not) be regarded as a 'casus belli.'" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.)

<sup>74</sup>See the statement of Tcharykow, *Glimpses of High Politics*, p. 188. Cf. Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe*, p. 139.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AFGHAN QUESTION AND THE ENTENTE OF 1907

The years following the Russian advances of 1884 and 1885 were marked by a rapid development of the Russian railways in Central Asia, which culminated in the junction of the Trans-Caspian and Orenburg-Tashkent lines at the Kushk on the Afghan frontier.<sup>1</sup> The construction of these railways was observed with customary disquietude by the English, who regarded them as strictly strategic,<sup>2</sup> since the Afghan trade of Russia was known to be small and of itself insufficient to warrant them. No serious incident, however, grew out of this "railway advance"; and with the settlement of the Pamirs question in 1895, there was no further room for disputes concerning the Afghan boundaries. The years that followed were, indeed, accompanied by a gradual relaxation of the Anglo-Russian tension, though this was more perceptible in Europe than in Asia, and was attended by "spasms of vehement distrust at Tashkent and Calcutta."<sup>3</sup>

The year 1900, however, witnessed the revival of the Afghan question, at a time when Great Britain was seriously involved in the South African War. It had been repeatedly shown that the problems of Central Asia were inseparable from Imperial exigencies elsewhere, and it seems not improbable that the Russians were availing themselves of the British pre-occupation to further their interests in a quarter where they had already won so many diplomatic victories.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it was well known that the relations of the British and the Amir Abdurrahman were not cordial, notwithstanding the settlement effected by Sir Mortimer Durand in 1893.<sup>5</sup> On the whole the time seemed ripe for broaching a question which the Russian Cabinet had for some time considered: the establishment of direct relations with Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, II, p. 264.

<sup>2</sup>Gooch, *History of Modern Europe*, p. 373. Cf. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, p. 373.

<sup>3</sup>*Cambridge History of the British Empire*, V, p. 426. On October 29, 1895, however, Prince von Radolin wrote from St. Petersburg to Prince von Hohenlohe: "In every circle in St. Petersburg there is evidently very strong displeasure against England. All that England does fills the Russians with suspicion, and the public assumes that any joint action with England must be to Russia's disadvantage from the start. . . . It is remarkable that side by side with this animosity against England, there is unmistakably a certain feeling of fear of her. They watch with the greatest tension and anxiety every indication pointing at a rapprochement of England towards Germany, or vice-versa." (*Die Grosse Politik*, X, pp. 93-94. Dugdale's translation.)

<sup>4</sup>That the Russian Government was keenly interested in the course of the war, and sensible of the implications of the British reverses, is well brought out in the *British Documents on the Origins of the War* (hereinafter cited as *British Documents*), IV, pp. 512 ff. Neither was the Amir unaware of the British defeats. See Hamilton, "Indo-Afghan Relations Under Lord Curzon," *Fortnightly Review*, LXXXVI, p. 985.

<sup>5</sup>See above, pp. 64 ff. The Amir (who died in 1901 and was succeeded by his son Habibullah) desired to be admitted to direct relations with the London Government. The proposal, put forward by his second son, Nasrullah, who visited England in 1895, was refused. See *The Life of Abdur Rahman*, II, p. 139, and Buckle, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, II, pp. 532, 536, 543.

<sup>6</sup>*British Documents*, I, p. 307.

In a Memorandum dated February 6, 1900, the Russian Government stated that it regarded "comme indispensable le rétablissement des rapports directs entre la Russie et l'Afghanistan pour ce qui concerne les affaires de frontière."<sup>7</sup> The need for direct relations grew out of the completion of the Trans-Caspian railway and the creation in 1885 of a coterminous frontier of several hundred versts in extent.<sup>8</sup> The old arrangement whereby frontier questions were settled by reference to the British Government was no longer satisfactory, and there was a need for the regularization of the relations between the Russian and Afghan Governments. So far as the Agreement of 1873 was concerned, Russia regarded it as being still in force, and as placing Afghanistan outside her sphere of action.<sup>9</sup> As for the suggested direct relations with Afghanistan, they were to have no "caractère politique."<sup>10</sup>

Lord Salisbury refrained from discussing the Memorandum at the time of its presentation, sending it on to the Indian Government for consideration and advice.<sup>11</sup> The reply of the Viceroy's Government was received in May. Gratified by the recognition on the part of the Russian Government of the continued validity of the Agreement of 1872-1873, by which "Afghanistan is entirely outside the sphere of Russian action," it pointed out that "these engagements were . . . renewed in 1874, 1876, 1878, 1885, 1887, and 1888, the later of these assurances being subsequent to the date when Russo-Afghan boundaries became coterminous. To this chain of frequently renewed obligations must now be added the date of 1900. Rarely, if ever, has a formal and voluntary engagement been invested, by dint of constant reiteration, with greater solemnity or a more binding force."<sup>12</sup> As for the Russian proposal of February, if it involved the sending of an envoy to Afghanistan, the Indian Government deprecated ("with all the earnestness" in its power) any alteration of the *status quo*.<sup>13</sup> Such a move on Russia's part would infallibly result in the "growth of a condominium at Cabul, and would ultimately involve the sacrifice of the exclusive control by Great Britain of Afghan external policy—the sole *quid pro quo* for British outlay and engagements; while if the Government of India made the suggested proposal to the Ameer, he would regard it as evidence of culpable weakness."<sup>14</sup> The Indian Government suggested that the Russian Cabinet be invited to explain more clearly the means by which "it would propose to attain the desired non-political objects."<sup>15</sup>

At a somewhat later date (June 28, 1900) the India Office communicated dispatches from the Government of India, "in which they [the

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 310-311.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 311.



concerning it. The temper of its members was hostile,<sup>33</sup> and the Amir ordered his Secretary of State, while acknowledging receipt of the Russian communication and expressing willingness to discuss the matter, to request that in the future all communications be made through the Indian Government, "in accordance with the precedent established by his father, the Amir Abdur Rahman."<sup>34</sup> It does not appear that this act of apparent loyalty to the British was due to any affectionate regard for them on the part of the Afghans, but to the inveterate suspicion of foreign influence, the effect of which Russia and Great Britain were made to feel impartially.<sup>35</sup>

Discussions relative to the matter of direct relations between Russia and Afghanistan continued, Lord Lansdowne suggesting to the India Office the recognition of the right of correspondence (which Count Benckendorff believed could not in any case be prevented),<sup>36</sup> while seeking to obtain from Russia an assurance that she would abstain from steps "towards the dispatch of Russian Agents into Afghanistan without previously consulting His Majesty's Government, and affording them an opportunity of discussing the matter fully with the Ameer and the Russian Government."<sup>37</sup> It was evident that if such a promise could be obtained, the well-known aversion of the Amir to the reception of *any* foreign agents would subserve the British desire to exclude the Russians. The British astutely employed the obligation that they owed the Amir not to agree to anything that might prove displeasing to him. "It would be impossible," they said, "for us to make an arrangement with regard to trans-frontier relations without the concurrence of the Ameer, and this was the reason why it was of such importance to arrive at a clear understanding with the Russian Government as to the scope and nature of their proposal."<sup>38</sup> How easily this position could be modified, when modification became expedient, will presently be seen.

During the period of these discussions, friction had arisen between Russian and Afghan officials over the alleged destruction of boundary

<sup>33</sup>Hamilton, in the article cited (p. 993), says: "When the letter had been read out, the Amir asked for the opinion of the Durbar, the temper of its members being illustrated by Ali Yar Khan, who said: 'Let this Turki dog who carries messages for infidels be beaten on the head with shoes till his hair falls off. That ought to be our answer to the Russians.'"

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 994.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 998-999. Lord Curzon thought otherwise, and feared that an alliance between Russia and the Amir might be concluded. On November 27, 1902, he wrote the Secretary of State for India: "All that I have meant to say to-day is that if the Amir breaks faith and deserts us, there is an alternative policy to inaction, and that is a policy which, though not without risk, seems to promise more benefit than injury to British interests. What I maintain that you cannot possibly do is to sit still and let the entire policy and outlay of the past 20 years, nay the last 60, be wiped out before your eyes. If this breakdown occurs, it will be due to open perfidy on the part either of the Amir, or of Russia, or of both. If you do not like to tackle Russia, then at least punish the Amir. If you allow a man and a State of his calibre to flout the British Empire, then we had better put up our shutters and close business." (Quoted in Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, II, p. 267.) The Home Government was strongly opposed to any "forward" action such as that implied in Curzon's letter, and so irreconcilable were the opinions of the Viceroy and of the London Cabinet that a rupture probably would have occurred had Habibullah definitely broken with the Government of India. (See Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, II, p. 268.)

<sup>36</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 515.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 517.

pillars near Herat.<sup>39</sup> The British Government held that questions relating to the maintenance of a frontier demarcated by British and Russian officers could not be considered "non-political," and should therefore certainly be settled by representatives of the two Governments<sup>40</sup> responsible in the first place for the creation of the frontier. Should further questions of such character arise, Sir C. Scott was instructed to suggest that the Russians handle them through the medium of the British Consulate-General at Meshed<sup>41</sup>—a more direct and presumably a more satisfactory arrangement than the circuitous one which the English had previously prescribed<sup>42</sup>—rather than through Afghan officials, as, for instance, the Governor of Herat, with whom they were treating concerning the boundary pillars.

Count Lamsdorff's response to Scott's inquiries and suggestions was at first evasive. But the Russian Cabinet being pressed concerning the matter, definitely rejected the British proposals; and in language that was "peremptory in tone" and "deeply resented" by the British,<sup>43</sup> bluntly reiterated the position, first formally stated in the Memorandum of February 6, 1900, that direct relations with Afghanistan had become necessary.

La question de rétablissement des piliers ne touchant en rien à l'ordre général des choses dans des parages, le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères ne peut que réitérer sa ferme décision de suivre le procédé indiqué dans ses communications antérieures et se fait un devoir d'ajouter qu'après les explications franches qu'il était à même de donner à ce sujet il considère la question dont il s'agit comme définitivement close.<sup>44</sup>

The autumn of 1903 witnessed something like a new Anglo Russian crisis,<sup>45</sup> to which Russia's "peremptory tone" in connection with the Afghan discussions no doubt contributed. In October Mr. Spring-Rice, British Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, summed up the correspondence in one sentence: "Russia has notified her intention of sending, when she pleases, her Agents into Afghanistan."<sup>46</sup> The British Cabinet felt, therefore, that if any further proposals were made, they should proceed from the Russian Government.<sup>47</sup> On November 5 Spring-Rice was instructed to inform Count Lamsdorff "that in the event of any further

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 512-519.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 512.

<sup>42</sup>The Russians, adhering strictly to the agreement which gave the British an official of Afghan foreign affairs, would handle questions relating to Afghan territory. In October 1899 the frontier official would report to the Governor-General of Afghanistan, who would suggest the matter to St. Petersburg; the Cabinet at St. Petersburg would communicate with the British Government, which would take up the matter with the Government of India; the British Government, through its Mohammedan agent, would present the problem to India, and discuss it with India; solutions, the results of such negotiations would then, sanctioned by the Council of the Empire, become known and effective at the point of their origin.

<sup>43</sup>British Documents, IV, pp. 216-217, 219, 221.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>45</sup>Polk, op. cit., p. 219. See also the letter of 25 November, French Ambassador to St. Petersburg, to St. Petersburg, dated August 26, 1903. Documents diplomatiques français, 1903, Série, III, pp. 246 ff.

<sup>46</sup>British Documents, IV, p. 219.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 220.

incident arising, owing to an attempt on the part of Russian frontier officials to force the Afghan authorities to enter into direct relations with them, the responsibility for any such incident and its consequences must rest entirely with the Russian Government."<sup>48</sup>

The tension thus created was relieved, however, when the Russian Ambassador, Count Benckendorff, returning to his post after a visit in St. Petersburg, gave Lord Lansdowne such "cordial assurances" of the desire of the Russian Government "to come to an amicable understanding with His Majesty's Government upon this and other questions," that the Foreign Secretary telegraphed Mr. Spring-Rice to refrain from presenting to Count Lamsdorff the contents of his letter of November 5.<sup>49</sup> Later the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg was asked to express the satisfaction of the London Government "at receiving these friendly communications," which produced an entirely different impression of the attitude of the Russian Government from that conveyed by the correspondence of the last three years.<sup>50</sup>

The conciliatory tone of these latter interchanges restored more friendly relations between the two Powers as the Far Eastern war clouds hovered over Russia. The Russo-Japanese War began in February, 1904, and Lord Lansdowne agreed with Count Benckendorff that further negotiations would be impracticable during the period of hostilities.<sup>51</sup>

The Afghan question was not lost sight of, however, even during the war. When it was again raised early in 1905, it was because of Russian susceptibilities, rather than British. In February of that year Count Benckendorff inquired of Lord Lansdowne whether the current British negotiations with the Amir portended any change of policy on the part of the British Government toward Afghanistan, or indicated any intention to annex or occupy Afghan territory.<sup>52</sup> The negotiations to which Benckendorff adverted, and which he admitted to von Bernstorff, Councillor of the German embassy in London, to be the subject of serious concern on the part of the Russian Cabinet,<sup>53</sup> were those of Mr. (later Sir) Louis Dane, who had been sent to Kabul late in 1904 to reach an agreement with Habibullah, who, since his accession in 1901, had shown an attitude of independence that was very disconcerting to the British in India. Especially vexatious were his repeated refusals to accept the Viceroy's invitations to visit India.<sup>54</sup> Dane was still in Afghanistan at the time when Benckendorff's question was asked. The Russian Ambassador was assured that British policy had undergone no change whatever, and

<sup>48</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 520.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>*Die Grosse Politik*, XIX, pp. 657-658.

<sup>54</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 520. Cf. Isvolsky, *Recollections of a Foreign Minister*, p. 34.

that there was no intention on the part of the British of appropriating Afghan territory or of interfering with the internal affairs of the country.<sup>55</sup> The Foreign Secretary did not fail to embrace the opportunity, however, of declaring once more that the British Government "continued to claim that Afghanistan should remain free from the influence or interference of any foreign Power and that the Amir's relations with other countries should remain in their hands."<sup>56</sup> Lansdowne then asked Benckendorff whether, in return for a formal assurance by the British, the Russian Government would be willing to state in writing that its "policy and intentions in regard to Afghanistan also remained unaltered," that Afghanistan continued to be regarded by the Russians as outside their sphere of influence.<sup>57</sup> If so, he was authorized to confirm, on the part of the British Government, the provisional assurances previously given concerning the interchange of communications between Russian and Afghan officials on "non-political questions of a local character."<sup>58</sup>

Count Benckendorff did not consider the time auspicious ("when it was necessary for the Russian Foreign Office to proceed with the utmost circumspection") to enter anything of the nature of a formal agreement. As for Lord Lansdowne's verbal statement of policy, the Russian Government likewise desired that Afghanistan should remain a buffer state, and would therefore continue to abstain from any interference with its independence or integrity.<sup>59</sup> Benckendorff apparently attached considerable importance to the expression "a buffer State," and Lansdowne accepted the term as "an appropriate description of the position which both Governments desired to assign to Afghanistan."<sup>60</sup> This conversation was recalled by the Russian Government in 1907.

Since the opening of the discussions in 1900 a number of diplomatic incidents had occurred which had an important bearing on Anglo-Russian relations. Great Britain's treaty with Japan, first concluded in 1902, was renewed in 1905, but modified so as to obligate the signatory Powers to help each other in the event of an unprovoked attack by one Power, rather than by two Powers as the 1902 agreement stipulated. Furthermore, the sphere of action to which the treaty applied was extended to the northwest frontier of India. Though the treaty (like all treaties) had a "purely pacific purpose," no great acumen on the part of the Russians was required to discern that it was directed against them.<sup>61</sup> England's policy of "splendid isolation" was further broken in 1904 by the *entente cordiale* with France, Russia's ally since 1894. The Anglo-Japanese al-

<sup>55</sup>British Documents, IV, p. 521.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Lamsdorff observed that everyone from the Tsar down regarded the treaty as directed against Russia. (Gooch, *op. cit.*, p. 384.) Cf. Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 271.



The Russian Cabinet, however, was not disposed to hurried action, and found a number of objections to the British proposals. These were brought out in the Russian draft of a convention, given to Nicolson on May 15. The Russians were particularly careful to continue the "buffer state" idea, which, it will be recalled, had been verbally accepted by Lord Lansdowne.<sup>68</sup> Article I of the Russian draft stated: "L'Afghanistan constituera un Etat-tampon (buffer state) entre les possessions respectives des deux Puissances contractantes."<sup>69</sup> It was also stipulated that Great Britain should not annex or occupy any part of Afghanistan nor interfere in its internal affairs.<sup>70</sup>

On June 17 M. Isvolsky was handed a British counter-draft. The expression "buffer state" had been deleted ("as hardly one," Nicolson explained, "to be used in a solemn Convention"),<sup>71</sup> and alterations made in the categorical article of the Russian draft concerning British intervention in Afghanistan, since such an unqualified statement might lead the Amir to a feeling of freedom inimical to the security of the Indian frontiers. The British draft made non-interference dependent upon the fulfilment by the Amir of his engagements under the Treaty of Kabul, signed on March 21, 1905. As for the question of occupation and annexation, the British insisted that it must be treated bilaterally.<sup>72</sup> The Russians again delayed, pointing out that, according to the British draft, the prohibition placed upon Russia as to non-interference was absolute, while that imposed upon the British was conditional; that, whereas the provisions of the convention that were beneficial to Russia (that is, the matter of frontier relations) depended upon the sanction of the Amir, all the *obligations* assumed by Russia became operative on the signing of the convention.<sup>73</sup>

Though minor changes in the draft were suggested by the British which made the instrument acceptable to Isvolsky and the Tsar, persistent opposition, emanating apparently from the War Ministry, continued. Sir Edward Grey was eager to close the negotiations. On August 26 he telegraphed Nicolson:

I hope Russian Government will bear in mind that larger issues are indirectly at stake even than those directly involved in these agreements, for it has throughout been our expectation and belief that an agreement as regards Asia worked in a friendly manner would so influence the disposition of this country towards Russia as to make friendly relations possible on questions which may arise elsewhere in the future. Without such an Agreement this expectation must be disappointed."

<sup>68</sup>See above, p. 75. See also Poltz, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>69</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 542.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.* See also Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>71</sup>See Grey's statement on this point made in Parliament on February 17, 1902. (*Speeches on Foreign Affairs*, p. 69.)

<sup>72</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 545.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 565.

The points of disagreement were finally composed, and the "Convention Relating to Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet" was signed at St. Petersburg by Nicolson and Isvolsky on August 31. The convention concerning Afghanistan,<sup>95</sup> which had been the last part to be concluded, consisted of five articles. The British Government declared that it had no intention of changing the status of Afghanistan, while Russia, on her part, renewed her assurances that she considered the territories of the Amir to be outside her sphere of influence. Great Britain agreed not to encourage the Amir to take any measures threatening Russia—a stipulation which seems to have been the outgrowth of a fear on the part of the Russian Ministry that Afghanistan might be transformed from a "buffer state" (the term to which the British had taken exception) into an *avant-garde* of the Indian Empire.<sup>96</sup> By the convention Russia, while agreeing to conduct all political relations with Afghanistan through the intermediary of Great Britain, was conceded the right to settle local questions of a non-political character with Afghan officials. As for trade with Afghanistan, the principle of equality of opportunity was agreed upon, to the great disgust of many in England.<sup>97</sup>

The last article of the convention proved to be an unexpectedly serious stumbling block. It reads:

Les présents arrangements n'entreront en vigueur qu'à partir du moment où le Gouvernement Britannique aura notifié au Gouvernement de Russie le consentement de l'Emir aux termes ci-dessus stipulés.

M. Isvolsky desired that the publication of the convention should take place as soon as possible, and Sir Edward Grey decided that, although publication should not occur before the Amir *received* the text from the Government of India to which it was communicated, it would not have to await the *consent* of the Amir to its contents.<sup>98</sup> The instruction to the Viceroy to have the agreement verbally explained to the Amir was sent on September 6.<sup>99</sup> Morley's private letter of September 7 to Nicolson stated that the Amir was sixteen days from Simla, so that he had not had time to receive communication. He hoped that the Amir would not be troublesome, though he might be slow.<sup>100</sup> In order to give ample time, in spite of Russian importunity, publication was delayed until September 26.<sup>101</sup>

The Amir was not only slow: he refused to give his assent. He *never* gave it.<sup>102</sup> What was the effect of the Amir's refusal on the Anglo-

<sup>95</sup>The text of the Convention is given in *British Documents*, IV, pp. 618-620, and in the *Parl. Papers*, 1908, CXXV, Cd. 3753.

<sup>96</sup>Poltz, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>97</sup>Davies, *The North-west Frontier*, p. 172.

<sup>98</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 573.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 587.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 574. See *The Times* of September 26 and the following days for press comments on the Anglo-Russian Convention.

<sup>102</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 577. Lord Minto had predicted that this would be the case. Indeed, during the period of the negotiations he wrote King Edward to this effect. "The King

Russian Convention concerning Afghanistan? In the strictest sense, it must be said (as Sir Arthur Nicolson did say)<sup>103</sup> that the convention was a dead letter; and, although the situation did not "necessarily lead to the abrogation or suspension of the Persian and Thibetan agreements," since the "Convention concernant l'Afghanistan" formed an integral part of the whole, it was clear that its non-execution must have a definitely weakening effect on the entire convention. There were those who contended that the Russian Government foresaw the difficulties which the British would have in obtaining the Amir's consent, and purposely framed an instrument to which the Amir must infallibly take exception.<sup>104</sup> Such a belief was discredited by Nicolson, who held that Russia would have accepted the agreement without reference to the Amir.<sup>105</sup>

In reality the consent of the Amir was probably not of great importance, since the Russian Government later quite definitely stated that it considered the convention in force without the Amir's sanction.<sup>106</sup> The strength of the convention depended in the last analysis upon much less academic considerations—namely, the vitalizing of the new friendship which its conclusion signalized. The fundamental importance of the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907, even more than that of the Anglo-French entente of 1904, was potential rather than substantive. Its significance depended upon its diplomatic *milieu*, whether favorable or unfavorable. Sir Arthur Nicolson put it cogently, when he wrote to Sir Edward Grey in July, 1908:

There is one more consideration, which to my mind is of great importance. Essential as a friendly Afghanistan may be to our position in India, equally essential, I submit, is a friendly Russia to our general international position, both as regards the actual situation, and also in respect to that in the not distant future. If we wish, and I presume that we do wish, in the interest of peace, to avert the possibility of any Power assuming a position from which she could dictate to others, a close understanding with France and Russia is, I submit, an object for the attainment of which every effort should be made. We have secured an undertaking with France. That with Russia is in its very early infancy, and will require, for reasons which I need not explain, careful nurture and treatment. Any serious check to this infant growth may kill it before it has advanced in years, and its disappearance would doubtless eventually react on our relations with France. . . .<sup>107</sup>

As it turned out, the Asiatic agreement between the two Powers, though denounced by certain groups both in England and in Russia,<sup>108</sup> became the final vehicle of the Triple Entente. For the proper sustenance *was* provided with the passing of those seven years of fitful peace that yet remained before the Great Catastrophe.

sent the letter to Grey, who replied that he hoped that the Amir would acknowledge the projected agreement, but that in any case the agreement must stand." (Lee, *op. cit.*, II, p. 570.)

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 575.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 576.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 576-577; Grey, *Speeches on Foreign Affairs*, p. 192.

<sup>107</sup>*British Documents*, IV, p. 576. See also Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 190 ff., and Grey, *Speeches on Foreign Affairs*, p. 75.

<sup>108</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*, II, p. 572. The opposition in Parliament was led by Earl Percy. See Grey, *Speeches on Foreign Affairs*, pp. 55 ff.



British? An obvious one was to fight Russia, to cripple her, and to render her incapable of further menacing the British position. There were always plenty of jingoes who believed this to be the only final solution, who believed that the postponement of war with Russia was the postponement of the inevitable. Another possible solution was for the British to advance and absorb the territories, which, it was held by some, must otherwise certainly fall into the hands of the antagonist. This would mean that the British and Russian empires would eventually meet, an idea which was generally frowned upon. A third was for the British to fortify their position in India by building up a strong defensive military establishment there, but to refrain from any external aggression. This was, in general, Lord Lawrence's policy of "masterly inactivity." A fourth was to accept the inevitability of the Russian advance, but to exact from the Imperial Government unequivocal promises that the advance must cease once it had reached a certain limitary line somewhere beyond the frontier of India. Still another was to make a treaty with Russia for the partition of the lands lying between the British and Russian possessions—an arrangement suggested by Count Schouvaloff in 1876,<sup>4</sup> and later more or less seriously considered by the English.<sup>5</sup> It is to be noted that the problem was primarily a British problem. It was they who had first established themselves in Central Asia. Theirs it was to devise means whereby their position might be insured and their interests protected. It was the British, therefore, who were on the diplomatic offensive during most of the period embraced in this study—they who were inquiring, reminding, scolding, threatening.

It has been remarked that the British can not be said to have had a foreign policy in the nineteenth century, unless the very *absence* of one constitute a policy. Certainly this lack of any continuing line of action<sup>6</sup> is well illustrated in their handling of the Afghan question; for nearly all the possible lines of action suggested above were followed at one time or other, all of them strongly urged by one Minister or another. War indeed was not made. But as regards that final arbitrament of nations, the writer believes that it is not generally known how near Great Britain and Russia were to it as a result of the crisis of 1885. As matters turned out, the English twice during our period fought the Afghans as a less hazardous alternative to war with Russia. In general, however, it was some version of the buffer idea which dominated the thinking of British statesmen in relation to the Central Asian question; and we have seen

<sup>4</sup>See above, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>See Gwynn and Duckwell, *Life of Dilke*, I, p. 553.

<sup>6</sup>This was changed in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and the change is illustrated particularly in the first decade of the twentieth, when the Liberals, under Grey, adopted the line in foreign affairs originated during the régime of Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office. (For a recent discussion of this point, see Professor Knapland's Introduction in Grey, *Speeches on Foreign Affairs*.)

how it was that Afghanistan, by reason of its location with reference to the Indian frontier, came to serve in the capacity of a buffer state. We may summarize the steps in the evolution of this policy.

In 1869 Prince Gortchakoff, on being questioned by Earl Granville concerning Russian activity in Central Asia, volunteered the statement that the Russian Government regarded Afghanistan as outside the sphere in which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence. This declaration was apropos of the British suggestion of a "neutral zone"; and though, as we have seen, the constituting of Afghanistan as a neutral zone was rejected by the British Cabinet, Gortchakoff's statement was repeatedly invoked when Afghanistan seemed to be endangered by reason of some new Russian advance, and was frequently reiterated by the Russians as binding upon them. In 1873 was effected the Granville-Gortchakoff Agreement, by which the northern frontier of Afghanistan was roughly defined as the Oxus river. This produced the argument concerning the "neutral zone"—Was Afghanistan a neutral zone, and was the territory on the Russian side of Afghanistan *ipso facto* within the Russian sphere of influence?—questions which became purely academic after the Russian occupation of the controverted areas was accomplished. The frontiers of Afghanistan were completed and made definitive in the northeast and northwest by action of the Joint Commissions delegated by the British and Russian Governments in the 1880's and 1890's. That is, the Commissions delimited the country which was avowed by Russia to lie outside her sphere of influence and in which she recognized the special interest of Great Britain.

The last phase of the question was opened when the Russian Government in 1900 expressed its intention of initiating direct relations with the Afghans on matters of a non-political and purely local character. The British claimed exclusive control of the foreign relations of the *Emir*, and interpreted this control as precluding his correspondence with, or his receiving of agents from, other Governments than that of India. The question was settled by the Convention of 1907, which dealt entirely with Central Asian questions, but which was destined to become the closing link in the Triple Entente. In the agreement concerning Afghanistan, though the expression "buffer" was avoided at the request of the British, the principle was practically maintained by British proposals to refrain from interference in or annexation of the territory of the *Emir*.

It has been the purpose of the writer to arrive, so far as possible, at a consideration of Anglo-Afghan relations as suggested by Anglo-Russian relations concerning Afghanistan. British policy toward the *Emir* was a fluctuating and uncertain as British policy toward Russia. In the last

Concluded. Part II in Central Asia, p. 100. For the two years 1907-1908 and 1908-1909 we have no documentary evidence of any change in British policy toward Afghanistan. The agreement, now signed, is the subject of the next chapter.

specifically should operate as an encouragement of the Ameer to extend his possessions at the expense of the neighbouring countries. I alluded in my despatch, of the 17th of October, to the success which had attended the recommendations made to the Ameer by the Indian Government to adopt the policy which had produced the most beneficial results in the establishment of peace in countries where it had long been unknown; and her Majesty's Government see no reason to suppose that similar results would not follow on the like recommendations. Her Majesty's Government will not fail to impress upon the Ameer in the strongest terms the advantages which are given to him in the recognition by Great Britain and Russia of the boundaries which he claims, and of the consequent obligation upon him to abstain from any aggression on his part, and Her Majesty's Government will continue to exercise their influence in the same direction.

Her Majesty's Government cannot however but feel that, if Badakshan and Wakhan, which they consider the Ameer justly to deem to be part of his territories, be assumed by England or Russia, or by one or either of them, to be wholly independent of his authority, the Ameer might be tempted to assert his claims by arms; that perhaps in that case Bokhara might seek an opportunity of acquiring districts too weak of themselves to resist the Afghan State; and that thus the peace of Central Asia would be disturbed, and occasion given for questions between Great Britain and Russia, which it is on every account so desirable to avoid, and which Her Majesty's Government feel sure would be as distasteful to the Imperial Government as to themselves.

Her Majesty's Government therefore feel that the Imperial Government, weighing these considerations dispassionately, will concur in the recognition which they have made of Shere Ali's rights, as stated in my despatch of October, and by so doing put an end to the wild speculations, so calculated to distract the minds of Asiatic races, that there is some marked disagreement between England and Russia, on which they may build hopes of carrying out their border feuds for purposes of self-aggrandisement.

Her Majesty's Government congratulate themselves upon the prospect of a definite settlement as between the two Governments of the question of the boundaries of Afghanistan, the details of which have been so long in discussion.

Your Excellency will read and give a copy of this despatch to Prince Gortchakow.

I am, &c.,

Granville.

Lord A. Loftus.

Prince Gortchakow to Count Brunnow.—(Communicated to Earl Granville by Count Brunnow, February 5.)

St. Petersburg, le 19/31 Janvier, 1873.

M. le Comte,

Lord Augustus Loftus m'a communiqué la réponse du Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté Britannique à notre dépêche sur l'Asie Centrale, sous la date du 7/19 Décembre.

Je joins ci-près une copie de cette pièce.

Nous voyons avec satisfaction que le Cabinet Anglais continue à poursuivre, dans ces parages, le même but que nous, celui d'y assurer la paix et autant que possible la tranquillité.

La divergence de nos vues consistait dans les frontières assignées aux domaines de Shir Ali.

Le Cabinet Anglais y fait entrer le Badakshan et le Vakhan, qui, à nos yeux, jouissaient d'une certaine indépendance. Vu la difficulté de constater, dans toutes

## APPENDICES

ses nuances, la réalité dans ces parages lointains, vu le plus de facilité qu'a le Gouvernement Britannique de recueillir des données précises, et surtout vu le désir de ne point donner à cette question de détail plus d'importance qu'elle ne comporte, nous ne refusons pas d'admettre la ligne de démarcation Anglaise.

Nous sommes d'autant plus portés à cet acte de courtoisie que le Gouvernement Anglais s'engage à user de toute son influence sur Shir Ali pour le maintenir dans une attitude pacifique et insister sur l'abandon de sa part de toute agression ou conquête ultérieure. Cette influence est incontestable. Elle repose non seulement sur l'ascendant matériel et moral de l'Angleterre, mais aussi sur les subsides dont Shir Ali lui à l'obligation. Nous pouvons, dès lors, y voir une garantie réelle pour la conservation de la paix.

Votre Excellence voudra bien faire cette déclaration à M. le Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté Britannique et lui remettre une copie de cette dépêche. Lord Granville y verra, nous en sommes convaincus, une nouvelle preuve du prix que notre auguste Maître attache à entretenir et à consolider les meilleures relations avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté la Reine Victoria.

Recevez, &c.,

Gortchakow.

Le Comte Brunnow.

Earl Granville to Lord A. Loftus.  
Foreign Office, February 5, 1873.

My Lord,

The Russian Ambassador communicated to me today Prince Gortchakoff's despatch of January 19/31, in reply to my despatch to your Excellency of the 24th of January respecting Central Asia; and I said that I should have great pleasure in communicating it to my colleagues.

I am, &c.,

Granville.

Lord A. Loftus.

## APPENDIX II

## THE PROTOCOL OF 1885

(Translation)

The Undersigned, the Marquis of Salisbury, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, &c., and his Excellency M. Georges de Staal, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias at the Court of Her Britannic Majesty, &c., have met together for the purpose of recording in the present Protocol the following agreement which has been arrived at between Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias:—

1. It is agreed that the frontier of Afghanistan, between the Heri-Rud and the Oxus, shall be drawn as follows:—  
The frontier will start from the Heri-Rud about 2 versts below the fort of Zulfikar, and will follow the line marked in red on the Map No. 1 attached to the Protocol as far as the point K in such a manner as not to approach nearer than a distance of 3,000 English feet to the edge of the scarp of the western defile

(including the crest marked L M N of the northern branch of that defile). From the point K the line will follow the crest of the heights bordering on the north the second defile, which it will cut a little to the west of the bifurcation at a distance of about 850 sajens from the point where the roads from Adam-Ulan, Kungrueli, and Ak-Robat meet. The line will then continue to follow the crest of the heights as far as the point P marked on Map No. 2 attached to the Protocol. From thence it will run in a southeasterly direction nearly parallel to the Ak-Robat road, will pass between the salt lakes marked Q and R, which are to the south of Ak-Robat and to the north of Souma Karez, and leaving Souma Karez to the Afghans, will run to Islim, where the frontier will cross to the right bank of the Egri-Gueuk, leaving Islim outside Afghan territory. The line will then follow the crests of the hills which border the right bank of the Egri-Gueuk, and will leave Chemen-i-Bid outside the Afghan frontier. It will in like manner follow the crest of the hills which border the right bank of the Kushk as far as Hauzi Khan. From Hauzi Khan the frontier will follow an almost straight line to a point on the Murghab to the north of Maruchak, fixed so as to leave to Russia the lands cultivated by the Sariks, and their pastures.

Applying the same principle both to the Turkomans subject to Russia and to the subjects of the Ameer of Afghanistan, the frontier will follow east of the Murghab a line north of the valley of the Kaisor, and west of the valley of the Sangalak (Ab-i-Andkhoh), and leaving Andkhoh to the east will run to Khoja Saleh on the Oxus.

The delimitation of the pastures belonging to the respective populations will be left to the Commissioners. In the event of their not arriving at an understanding, this delimitation will be settled by the two Cabinets on the basis of the Maps drawn up and signed by the Commissioners.

For the sake of greater clearness the principal points of the frontier-line are marked on the Maps annexed to the present Protocol.

2. It is agreed that Commissioners shall forthwith be appointed by the Governments of Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, who shall proceed to examine and trace upon the spot the details of the Afghan frontier as fixed by the preceding Article. One Commissioner shall be appointed by Her Majesty the Queen and one by His Majesty the Emperor. The escorts of the Commission are fixed at 100 men at most on either side, and no increase shall be made without an agreement between the Commissioners. The Commissioners shall meet at Zulfikar within two months from the date of the signature of the present Protocol, and shall at once proceed to trace the frontier in conformity with the preceding stipulations.

It is agreed that the delimitation shall begin at Zulfikar, and that, as soon as the Commissioners shall have met and commenced their labours, the neutralization of Penjdeh shall be limited to the district comprised between a line to the north running from Bend-i-Nadir to Burdj-Uraz-Khan and a line to the south running from Maruchak to Hauzi Khan, the Russian and Afghan posts on the Murghab being respectively at Bend-i-Nadir and Maruchak. The Commissioners shall conclude their labours as quickly as possible.

3. It is agreed that in tracing this frontier, and in conforming as closely as possible to the description of this line in the present Protocol, as well as to the points marked on the Maps annexed thereto, the said Commissioners shall pay due attention to the localities, and to the necessities and well-being of the local populations.

4. As the work of delimitation proceeds, the respective parties shall be at liberty to establish posts on the frontier.

5. It is agreed that, when the said Commissioners shall have completed their labours, Maps shall be prepared and signed, and communicated by them to their respective Governments.

In witness whereof, the Undersigned, duly authorized to that effect, have signed the present Protocol, and have affixed thereto the seal of their arms,  
Done at London, the 10th September, 1885.

(L.S.)

Salisbury.

(L.S.)

Staal.

## APPENDIX III

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA  
WITH REGARD TO THE SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF THE TWO  
COUNTRIES IN THE REGION OF THE PAMIRS

The Earl of Kimberley to M. de Staal.  
Foreign Office, March 11, 1895.

Your Excellency,

As a result of the negotiations which have taken place between our two Governments in regard to the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia in the country to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points have been agreed upon between us:—

1. The spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul) shall be divided by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near to its eastern extremity, shall follow the crests of the mountain range running somewhat to the south of the latitude of the lake as far as the Bendersky and Orta-Bel Passes.

From thence the line shall run along the same range while it remains to the south of the latitude of the said lake. On reaching that latitude it shall descend a spur of the range towards Kizil Rabat on the Aksu River, if that locality is found not to be north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, and from thence it shall be prolonged in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier.

If it should be found that Kizil Rabat is situated to the north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, the line of demarcation shall be drawn to the nearest convenient point on the Aksu River south of that latitude, and from thence prolonged as aforesaid.

2. The line shall be marked out, and its precise configuration shall be settled by a Joint Commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort not exceeding that which is strictly necessary for its proper protection.

The Commission shall be composed of British and Russian Delegates, with the necessary technical assistance.

Her Britannic Majesty's Government will arrange with the Amir of Afghanistan as to the manner in which His Highness shall be represented on the Commission.

3. The Commission shall also be charged to report any facts which can be ascertained on the spot bearing on the situation of the Chinese frontier, with a view to enable the two Governments to come to an agreement with the Chinese Government as to the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line, in such manner as may be found most convenient.

4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south of the above line of demarcation.

5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the

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